











# GENERAL SMUTS







J. C. SMUTS, HERMANUS, 1933

# GENERAL SMUTS

The Second Volume

by

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MILLIN



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The following note appeared in Volume I of this book, and it applies also to Volume II:

This book has been revised—as to its facts, but not its opinions—by General Smuts. It is based on his papers, official and private; his writings, published and unpublished; letters to and from him; the material collected and cherished over forty-seven years by Mrs. Smuts, for whose help the deepest gratitude is here expressed. Nothing has been withheld, nothing was even inspected before being offered; no conditions have been made, no exceptions.

The book is further based on knowledge common to South Africans; on facts and sources available to anyone in the world, and noted (if they have been published) at the end of each of the two volumes that make up the book. It is based on talk with General Smuts' supporters and opponents, equally puzzled by something outside precedent; on talk with his family; on a personal experience extending over fourteen years; on an admiration increasing with this experience which, from fear of excess, may be sometimes unjustly subdued; on his casual and unguarded conversation; and on questions deliberately asked him, never evaded and scrupulously answered.

It would seem as if more than appears in this Life of him might have been made of such opportunities. Yet his very refusal to protect himself has a little restrained a pen he would not control.

The book has also, to its great advantage, been revised (again as to facts but not opinions) by the Hon. J. H. Hofmeyr, Minister of the Interior, Public Health and Education in the Union Government.

S. G. M.



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## Chapter I

### THE WAR IN 1917

#### I

Three days after Smuts arrived in England from his German East African Campaign, the Imperial War Cabinet met for the first time. That was on March the twentieth, 1917.

The Imperial War Cabinet was not Britain's inner Council. The British War Cabinet directed the war. But the members of the British War Cabinet were members also of the Imperial War Cabinet and consulted with the other members; the British Prime Minister presided over it, and then there were the Secretary of State for India and the Dominion Prime Ministers—Smuts substituting for Botha, who, because of war measures and war excitement, had to stay in South Africa. There came also to the conferences such admirals, generals, ministers and other officials as were peculiarly concerned with the day's deliberations.

Mr. Lloyd George announced to them at once the terms on which the Central Empires might be allowed to have peace: punishment, he said, and restitution. 'Men', he said, 'must in future be taught to shun war as every civilised being shuns a murder, not merely because it is wrong in itself, but because it leads to inevitable punishment. That is the only sane foundation for any league of peace. . . . The first thing to accomplish in this war is to make every country feel that in future, if it attempts to repeat the outrage per-

petrated by Germany upon civilisation, it will inevitably encounter dire and destructive punishment.'

This was the state of the war in March of 1917—the height from which he spoke:

## 2

Within a month of the beginning of the war the British were retreating, the French were retreating, the Belgians were retreating, the Germans had Brussels and were advancing on Paris. Next month the Russians were crucially defeated at Tannenberg; in October the Belgian Government fled to France; the Germans had, in effect, Belgium; and battered, if they did not break, the British at Ypres.

In 1915 the British failed in the Dardanelles; three-quarters of a million Russian prisoners were taken; Poland was occupied; the Allies lost a quarter of a million men on the Western Front; the Italians, having delayed ten months to enter the war, lost a quarter of a million on their own front; the Bulgarians, angled for by both sides, chose Germany and overwhelmed Serbia; the French and British sent half a million allied troops to Salonika, where they remained locked up in what the Germans called their 'largest internment camp' until 1918.

In 1916 conscription came into force in England; a simultaneous general offensive was planned for France, Britain, Russia and Italy which duly failed; men died by the hundred thousand about Verdun; the British failed on the Somme; they failed to take Gaza; the Roumanians, inspired by the Russians' successful advance against Austria, joined the Allies and immediately lost most of their country; the Russians lost a million men; the Italians lost half a million men; and over Jutland, the one great naval occasion of the war, the spirit of Nelson neglected to preside. . . .



In England there were strikes, in France mutinies, in Italy risings, in Russia revolutions. Overwhelmed individuals were blamed for superhuman calamities. In such countries as still maintained themselves men lost their offices and great names—not less in England than elsewhere. Haldane went, who had spoken of Germany as his 'spiritual home'. Mr. Winston Churchill went because of the Dardanelles. Fisher (First Sea Lord again at 73) went because the Dardanelles and his North Sea Plan made a wrangling. They both blamed Kitchener, whose reputation was beginning to seem a façade before his ship was mined and sunk on the way to Russia.

Quite soon French went, the leader of the Contemptibles. Jellicoe went. Early in 1918 Robertson went, Chief of the Imperial General Staff. To this day Mr. Lloyd George cannot forgive Haig.

Because of the Irish Rebellion Augustine Birrell went. Because they were dissatisfied Carson and Sir Austen Chamberlain went. Others went. Four months before the Imperial Conference met, Mr. Lloyd George had compelled Asquith's resignation and taken his place as Prime Minister.

Soon in the Government of England there were War Cabinets and Ministers of Munitions, Air, Labour, Pensions, Propaganda, Food Control, Shipping and Blockade—all the time new departments of war were being created.

And the Allies spoke of a peace by negotiation, and the Germans spoke of a peace by victory, and President Wilson, offering to serve in any form, asked the belligerents to define their war aims as a preliminary to peace discussions. . . But since the Allies were afraid, as was said, to put their head in a noose, and the German war aims were of the kind best declared on The Day, replies were vague and peace talk was dropped.

To clinch the coming of The Day, Ludendorff, on Janu-

ary 31st of 1917, consented to 'unlimited' submarine warfare, and lost his gamble.

## 3

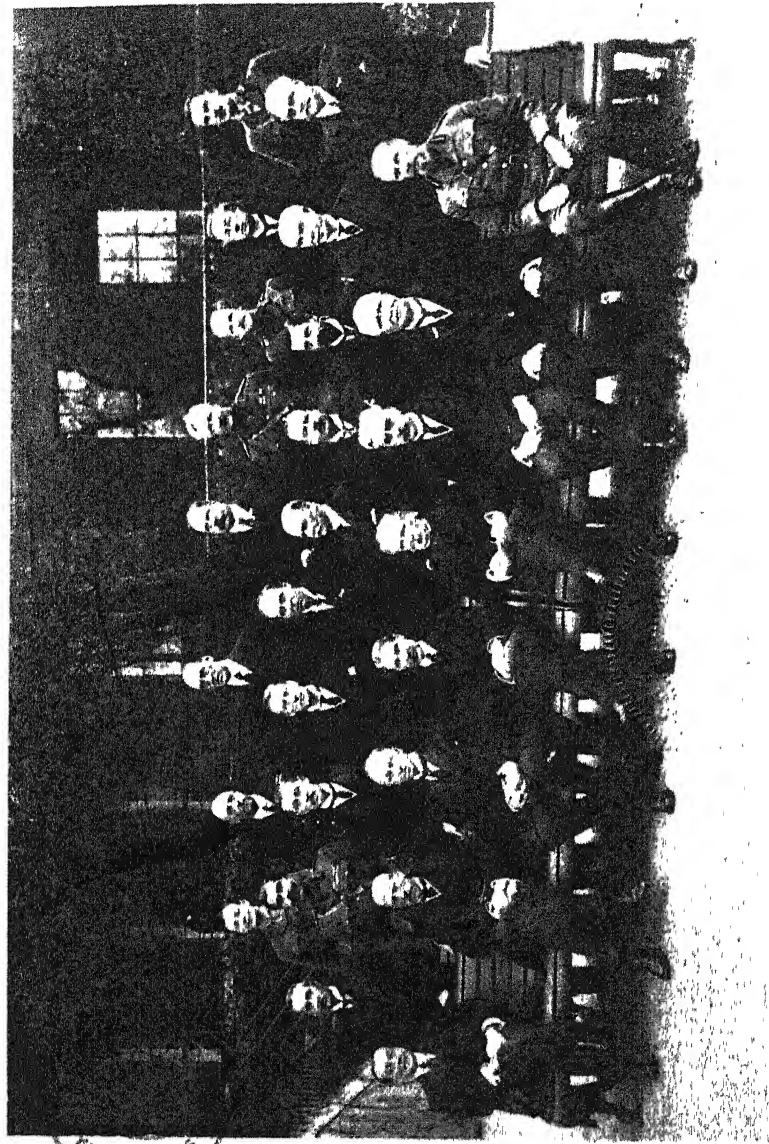
When the Imperial War Cabinet met in March, America was not yet committed to war, but it seemed impossible that she could much longer evade a responsibility many had thought to be hers since the sinking of the *Lusitania* two years before.

American men! American money! The Imperial War Cabinet, in speaking of the terms to be demanded from Germany, could surely not have avoided thinking of American men and money.

As against the eight million men of the Central Powers, the Allies had thirteen million. But five million of these were Russians and this very month Russia had gone into revolution; and the French were now preparing for the firing line their boys of seventeen; and the British, beginning with what the Germans had called 'General French's contemptible little army', had increased their hundred thousand men to three million, they had conscription and were calling urgently to their Dominions; and Italians were running away from their battle lines—simply rushing away, without their arms, from the fighting.

And since the outbreak of the war England alone had spent four and a third thousand million pounds; she was spending now seven millions a day; she was lending money to her Allies and Dominions; she was paying for wheat, maize, metals—for practically everything bought by the Allies outside the Allied countries; she was sending coal to France and Italy. With six weeks' food in England, English ships were bringing the Allies not only steel and other material for their munitions, but wheat for their daily bread, and these ships were going down before the German sub-

IMPERIAL WAR CABINET, LONDON, 1917





marines at such a terrible rate (a million tons in April 1917—60 per cent British) that the French Government were protesting against the publication by the English of their mercantile losses.

How urgent was the need for American men and money!

And the Germans had to chance American men and money!

4

For if there was desperation among the Allies, there was desperation in Germany too. The mark was declining, and also coal and clothes and textiles and meat rations. There were food substitutes and food riots. At Krupp's the rations two years ago had been: First breakfast: four slices of bread with butter or lard, cheese or sausages, coffee. Second breakfast: bread and cheese sandwiches, coffee. Midday dinner: meat or fish and potatoes. Afternoon: coffee. Supper: soup, meat or fish, vegetables.

Now the rations were: Breakfast: two slices of dry bread with coffee. Dinner: one day, turnips; the next day, boiled weed, turnips or beet leaves, potato scraps. Supper: maize soup (containing twice a week peas or walrus or seal flesh), turnips and beet.

In Austria-Hungary the economic position was worse and the morale was worse too. . . .

So The Day had to come quickly—and while faraway America was unprepared. One backed submarines to finish the war before the American could effectively reach Europe.

5

It was not only America that was distant and difficult. Generally speaking, by comparison with the accordance and contiguity of the Central Powers—their actual central

position—the Allies were radically disunited, not only physically, but morally.

France and England were traditional enemies; Russia and England were traditional enemies; into the very war Italy maintained a treaty with the Central Powers as a counterpoise to France and Russia; in the very act of war England had to keep the peace between the Italians and the French, who refused to work under the Italians in the Adriatic.

Then Japan, hated by America, a dozen years ago the victor of Russia, whom all Asia and Europe saw as the Prussia of the East, who was looking for an outlet in the States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Islands of the Pacific and naturally China—Japan was making money out of the war, she was making herself out of the war; if it paid her better she would go to Germany—imagine Japan as an associate. All the time Germany was trying to detach her from the Allies, and only recently Mexico had acted as agent between them.

In South Africa England had had to depend on a people that only twelve years before she had conquered; a revolution had duly taken place; and before ever South Africans could go against the Germans of Africa they had to fight one another.

Worse than anything, there was Ireland. . . .

Smuts' first particular work in the Great War had been to put down a rebellion among his own countrymen fomented by Germany. Because he was a Boer who had come to see in England a friend and saviour of civilisation, he was now invited, by the unanimous consent of Parliament, to preside over the Irish National Convention. He refused the invitation, but was destined, a few years later, to help determine Ireland's position in the British Commonwealth.

He had, for these reasons, a peculiarly intimate concern

with the rebellion in Ireland that, no less than the South African rebellion, was being worked by Germany.

## 6

'It is now', said the report of the Royal Commission on the rebellion in Ireland, 'a matter of common notoriety that the Irish have been in communication with the authorities in Germany and were for a long time known to be supplied by money through Irish-American Societies.'

It began like this:

Sir Roger Casement, an Irishman knighted on retiring from the British consular service, felt himself prepared to fight with Germany against England, or with anybody against England. Expecting the war, he had begun negotiations with Count von Bernstorff, the German ambassador in America, before war was declared, and although Bernstorff himself afterwards denied that he had ever, during his Washington days, been connected with the plots and intrigues of German agents the truth is that he was connected with these plots and intrigues before America came into the war and until the end of the war.

A plan came to be made of combining an Irish rebellion with a German attack on England. The combined offensive was timed for Easter Day, 1916.

This plan was the fruit of eighteen months' work.

First Casement went to Germany, partly to recruit a German-Irish brigade from among the Irish prisoners of war, and partly to act as a link between Germany and the Irish rebels.

From Germany he sent a message to Ireland that everything was going well in Germany. The intermediary was Bernstorff. The affair was, however, going better with the German Government than with the Irish prisoners.

The Irish prisoners, for Casement's greater convenience,

had been assembled in a separate camp, treated with particular favour, and assured by the German Government that Germany desired 'only the welfare of the Irish people'.

The Irish prisoners thanked the German Government for this consideration. 'We fully appreciate', they said, 'the kindness extended in (1) grouping us together under one roof; (2) assuring us of better food; (3) decreasing the amount of fatigue work to be performed. But', they went on, 'we regret we must beseech His Imperial Majesty to withdraw these concessions unless they are shared by the remainder of the prisoners as, in addition to being Irish Catholics, we have the honour to be British soldiers. . . .'

So now an American-Irish priest arrived in Germany to assist Casement, and his messages went through that Captain von Papen (also in the diplomatic service in Washington) who was later to become Herr Hitler's catspaw. Another conspirator was the Captain Rochm who was destined to perish in the Nazi purge of June 30th, 1934. His location was Holland. . . .

Then, early in 1916, Bernstorff sent a message to Holland which included a report from the Clanna Gael that the conspiracy could not much longer be delayed since their leaders were in danger of arrest; and in March Gottlieb von Jagow, the German Foreign Secretary, replied that arms would be landed in Tralee Bay as soon as the Sinn Feiners could arrange to be ready.

Towards the middle of March the Sinn Feiners duly sent a favourable reply to Bernstorff, and next day he telegraphed them the code to be used between the Germans and rebels while arms were in transit, and explained that submarines might safely enter Dublin Bay, and go as far as the Pigeon House without encountering nets.

On March 26th, Jagow arranged to send arms; and, hav-



ing been informed by Bernstorff that there were many private wireless stations in Ireland, gave warning also of a special code word to be used every night in connection with the German wireless press service.

By April 19th the conspiracy was ripe, urgent messages ran between Berlin and America fixing Easter Day as the time for the delivery of arms, and pressing for the landing of German troops, an air raid on England and a naval attack on the English coast. Irish ports were to be blockaded against England and Irish bases established for German submarines.

Attacks duly took place between April 24th and 26th.

The plot, however, failed. It failed because the Irish were a day late with their rebellion, and, in consequence, the German support miscarried. Roger Casement, landing with German munitions on the Kerry Coast near Tralee Bay on the morning of April 21st, was arrested, and charged under the Statute of Treasons, 1351, with 'adhering to the King's enemies elsewhere than in the King's realm, to wit in the Empire of Germany'.

## 7

The plot was revived in June.

In June a message was sent from Berlin to Bernstorff saying that Germany was still ready to help Ireland if Ireland would declare the help she needed. Ireland told Bernstorff that the help she needed was 'an expedition with a sufficient military force to cover the landing'; it was arranged that this time Germany should fix the day, and Germany's reward was to be Zeppelin and submarine bases on the West Coast of Ireland.

Again the plot failed. For now the Germans could not manage the expedition. And a few months later America entered the war, Bernstorff had to leave and the American

line of communication was broken. The negotiations, however, went on.

In October of 1917 Mr. de Valera said Sinn Fein could raise five hundred thousand fighting volunteers, but except through a German invasion of England they would have no hope. In January of 1918 he said 'so long as Germany is the enemy of England and England is the enemy of Ireland, so long will Ireland be the friend of Germany'.

In April 1918 there was a fresh plan for a German landing of arms that awaited for fulfilment only word from Ireland about the time, place and date. In May, German munitions were shipped on submarines at Cuxhaven, and German submarines were more than normally busy off the West Coast of Ireland.

But again nothing happened.

And then the Germans had all their fighting to do nearer home. . . .

The war was not ended when Irish men and women wrote to Smuts reminding him how the Irish had supported the Boers' cause and even fought beside the Boers. 'We never thought or hoped any Boer could ever help us.' In 1921 a brother of Roger Casement, whom Smuts had known in Africa, brought Smuts and de Valera together with a significant result.

Well, throughout the war, England stood with her back to a wall on which sat a dangerous Ireland.

8

So these were some of the inherent flaws in the Allies' chain.

There were others. If the Allies had the common aim of punishing the aggressor and freeing civilisation they had also their individual and conflicting aims.

The price Italy wanted for coming into the war was

Italia Irredenta; and, for naval rather than national reasons, she wanted also (and had to get) what Britain too might have liked: parts of Dalmatia.

Serbia was promised Bosnia, Herzegovina, and an outlet to the Adriatic, and Roumania was promised a piece of Hungary.

Poland expected independence and her old territory.

Belgium obviously had to be restored. As soon as peace came Belgium would want all she had lost in the war—and raw material, and the machinery Britain would vitally need herself.

France demanded naturally Alsace-Lorraine, and England hoped to frustrate Germany once and for all in the East: the intentions Germany had (as even during the war her newspapers said) of pressing through the Balkans, through Asia Minor, down to the boundaries of Egypt in the south and, her hand on the Suez Canal, to the eastern frontiers of Persia and the boundaries of Afghanistan and India. . . .

If the war was being fought for the great purpose of giving the world a lesson in civilisation it was also being fought for reasons less spiritual. If Turkey had to be broken up and adjustments made in the geography of Europe to ensure a permanent peace, also the lands of France, Belgium, Russia, Serbia, Montenegro, Poland and Arabia had to be restored, and their freedom and all the war had cost them.

Well might the first work of the Imperial War Cabinet be to discuss the terms on which Germany could have peace. . .

The proud platform from which the Cabinet spoke—the credit the Allies had against the losses and defeats of two and a half years—were the capture of Gorizia by the Italians, of Czernowitz by the Russians, and of Baghdad this month by the English. Then there was the work of Botha and Smuts in German South-West and German East Africa.

Now Smuts was in England.

It was a thing that amazed South Africa—the importance England attached to Jannie Smuts. (In South Africa, as elsewhere, people use a diminutive out of affection. But Smuts is called Jannie chiefly by the people who, even while repudiating him, feel they have the right to claim him, and who simultaneously wish to bring him nearer their own level.)

For these were the times when General Hertzog was fostering among his countrymen a nationalism based on memory of the Boer War. A Boer who chose to forget the Boer War was a renegade. While Mr. Lloyd George was thinking of Smuts as ‘that fine blend of intellect and human sympathy which constitutes the understanding man’, of ‘his rare gifts of mind and heart (that) strengthened those finer elements which are apt to be overwhelmed in an hour of savage temper and pitiless carnage’, his fellow countrymen were saying: ‘So goes our Empire-serving South Africa from fame to fame: fame based on shame: shame heaped on him by his own despised flesh and blood. . . .’

Simultaneously the South Africans who were adherents of England felt that Smuts was an extraordinary man for South Africa to have—the voice in the ears of Botha (which gave him a slightly satanic meaning); a clever, cold, fascinating personality—but could one, after all, compare South Africa with England, and was the best in South Africa necessarily the best in England? England herself had to prove to South Africa that a man cannot be more than best, and that the best in a million may be of the best in forty millions. . . .

What, indeed, was the particular value Smuts had to England? His personal qualities apart—his ‘practical contribution to our counsels’ of which Mr. Lloyd George could

not 'speak too highly'—precisely the fact that he was a Boer. This gave him a spiritual value which transcended all his own virtues—it made him the symbol of England's righteousness. As they said in England: 'He has done more than any man to recall this country to its great tradition.' 'Nothing has impressed the world more, and nothing has strengthened the Allies' cause more than the fact that in this struggle the enemies of yesterday are beside us in defending the principles we share in common.'

Smuts realised himself what he stood for—that he proved in his person England's claim to the Lord's consideration: he never spoke in England without the consciousness that he spoke as a Boer won to England, not by her arms, but by her principles.

'The British Empire', he said, 'is not founded on might or force, but on moral principles—on principles of freedom, equality and equity . . . Our opponent, the German Empire, has never learnt that lesson yet in her short history. She still believes that might is right, that a military machine is sufficient to govern the world. She has not yet realised that ultimately all victories are moral and that even the political government of the world is a moral government. The fundamental issue in this struggle in which we are engaged to-day is that the government of the world is not military, and it cannot be run by a military machine, but by the principles of equity, justice, fairness and equality, such as have built up this Empire. . . .'

'Fifteen years ago', he said (on receiving the freedom of Edinburgh), 'I was fighting against the British Empire. There is no change in me. The cause I fought for fifteen years ago is the cause for which I am fighting to-day. I fought for liberty and freedom then; and I am fighting for them to-day. You are a large-hearted people, and I am sure you will bear with me if I express the view that fifteen years ago

you were wrong. For a brief moment in your national history you got off the track and you came to grips with a small people . . . You returned to wiser counsels in handing back to us the liberty which we had thought would be jeopardised under the British flag. You made us free . . . As the result of the policy you adopted after the Boer War, a small nation that fought against you not so many years ago is to-day fighting in the common cause with you.

'That result has been brought about by your reversion to the old liberty . . . Spirit is the only sure foundation to build upon. . . .'

And then he said, in receiving the freedom of London, 'Let us remember that we are not standing alone. Silent, invisible forces have been set in motion by this great tragedy. . . . Once the end has come, it will be recognised that it was not so much the valour of our armies as the power of far greater forces that has carried us to victory. In the South African War I learned that you draw more strength from the cause you are fighting for than from all material resources. In my day and in my country I have seen freedom go under, but I have seen it rise again. . . .'

By the time Smuts came to speak of 'silent, invisible forces' America was in the war, and one hoped for the backing of forces not so silent and invisible. But long months were to pass before even the American forces had more than a spiritual value; and, in the meantime, one sought for help where one could find it. Smuts went from platform to platform in England spreading his confidence in the eventual triumph of right—a confidence so fresh, genuine, instinctive and unshakable, that it could also not fail to be infectious. 'I am full of courage' were the words he used to express that confidence.

Not the least of the forces that battled for the Allies was personified by Smuts.

## Chapter II

### ENGLAND DISCOVERS SMUTS

#### I

Smuts himself accepts those war years in England without undue wonder as part of his life. They fit into the pattern, he says.

Still, if one thinks of his life, herding sheep on his father's farm in the Cape, beginning to read and write at twelve, fighting the British—a Boer general at thirty—if one remembers his customary life in South Africa, it seems strange even to hear him say so simply of those days when he fell into a leading part in the world's affairs: 'They fit into the pattern.'

Here his life is to sit in his library on the farm or, if he is in the Cabinet, in his office in Pretoria; to hear members of Parliament talk for days on end about his own iniquities, and, after the rising of Parliament, to go through the country and explain to the people the work of the session.

He travels then from dorp to dorp on the veld, sleeping in trains or little hotels, and horsemen meet him, or motor cars, at whose head he rides into the village where he opens a public building or a bazaar or a cattle show.

Then, in the local hall—or from a wagon or verandah—he holds a meeting. Except an occasional cinema, politics is the farmers' only recreation, and to the meeting come, with particular interest, his political opponents.

## ENGLAND DISCOVERS SMUTS

Smuts tells them the things he has told the other villages—about the hand of friendship and the evils of grass-burning and so on—and they ask him questions he has heard for over twenty years. He answers politely—he believes, he says, in answering politely—but somebody stands up to point out that in 1915 he gave a different answer. In succeeding dorps he has to explain why in 1915 he gave a different answer. At the end of his meeting he gets a vote of confidence, sometimes by a great and sometimes by a narrow majority, and, whichever it is, he congratulates his party on an excellent result and a good augury for the future. . . .

However, he climbs a mountain, or searches for prehistoric stone implements, or takes his botany-stick and grass-press into the veld a thousand miles away, and that gives him back his soul's perspective, and so he comes home, as it seems, refreshed.

The people of South Africa make demands on Smuts they would make on no one else, and overseas visitors stop on the way to the Falls or Game Reserve to see him too. He has the reputation of not suffering fools; but, since fools do not know they are fools, the reputation brings him no relief.

### 2

It is said of Smuts that he does not give himself. And if to give oneself means (as it profoundly should) to take from others, this is true. Smuts hurts the eager vanity of the giving world by asking nothing of his fellows.

He began differently. There is his letter written, at sixteen, to a stranger: 'I trust you will favour me by keeping your eye upon me and helping me with your kind advice. . . . A real friend will prove a lasting blessing for me. . . . Assuring you of my deep gratitude, if I may have you for a friend. . . .'



## ENGLAND DISCOVERS SMUTS

What changed the confiding boy into the aloof man? One might suggest romantically: human disappointment. But there is something else. Smuts is essentially a reformer. Most reformers, working for human brotherhood, come to think of brotherhood as an abstract problem. The actual impingement of flesh and blood on their dreams is a hindrance to them. That men must be brothers is their principle, but for themselves they do not enjoy brotherliness. They sit on mountain tops or brood in studies and ask no more of the brothers than kindly to leave them alone.

To work at problems one must have peace, and it makes no difference if the problem concerns human relationships. . . .

When, therefore, people say that Smuts does not give himself they actually feel he does not want their humanity. There is another sense in which he gives himself all the time. The Chinese define soul as the sharpness of the knife—which cannot exist without the knife, which makes the knife a knife. Smuts gives, not himself, but his quality. . . . His quality, his essential, extraordinary optimism, was something England in the war years deeply needed.

### 3

Here are two descriptions of Smuts in England. The first is from Arnold Bennett's book, *Lord Raingo*, and has the licence of fiction; the second is by A. C. Benson.

In *Lord Raingo* Smuts appears as Christian, 'a Colonial Premier in military uniform, whose greeting was as punctilious as the Earl's and as genial as Sid Jenkins' . . . The Colonial Premier quietly reminded people that he too in the same year 1899 had been taken prisoner and had escaped—from the British. He spoke very smoothly, very benevolently, understating and using no gestures. Tom Hogarth challenged him. . . . "Wonderful how our Tommy hates

## ENGLAND DISCOVERS SMUTS

colonials," murmured Sid very low. "He's given our friend the name of stroking Jesus."

"Why?" asked Sam. And then: "I see."

"The General, speaking to the Earl, was tenderly stroking the Earl's arm."

Sid Jenkins is a Labour member of the War Cabinet, and Tom Hogarth is presumably Mr. Winston Churchill, for he is described as Minister of Munitions and as having been, in 1899, a Boer prisoner who escaped. But Mr. Winston Churchill was, in fact, a supporter of Smuts, and the habit of stroking people which earns the Colonial Premier in *Lord Raingo* the name of 'stroking Jesus' is one not known to South Africans.

The description of Smuts by A. C. Benson—even its embarrassing romanticism—is more characteristic of the attitude towards him in England during the war years.

'... I doubt if I should have guessed the General to be much over thirty. His light curling hair and beard hardly concealed his features. He looked about him with a boyish air of animation and curiosity and pleasure, and his blue eyes glanced quickly this way and that. . . . There was not a trace of care or weariness about him, though his days must of late have been full of serious consultations, social engagements, public speeches, hard official work. He did not look quite an Englishman, but still less did he resemble my idea of a Boer. It came into my head that if I had been asked to guess what he was I should have imagined that he might be a Scandinavian by race, while his wholly unembarrassed air, his responsive courtesy, the entire absence of any trace of self-consciousness under many curious and enthusiastic glances, would have made me think he was a prince of royal blood, travelling more for recreation than on business, to whom the present occasion of ceremony was but one of many similar functions, the natural atmosphere in which he

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lived, and giving him no concern at all, except for the pleasure to be derived from a friendly and sympathetic gathering. . . .

General Smuts rose. He looked round the hall with an alert and friendly glance of pleasure which instantly put him in close touch with his audience. Then came another surprise. He began to speak in a quick natural voice, with a slightly foreign accent, hardly seeming to exert himself, yet perfectly audible all over the room. It was not an oration at all, but more like a friendly conversation. It seemed, as he did it, to be the easiest thing in the world. But it was a triumph of hidden art. . . .

‘It really seemed like a man thinking aloud, and doing it with a natural grace and beauty; indeed the grace and restraint of the language indicated a mind of a high order, with a poetical touch about it, and in perfect command of its resources. It was not literary, and still less academic, but it had a perfect artistic appositeness and appropriateness to the exact occasion. . . .

‘What was the special charm of it all? In the first place there was the charm of contrast. One knew of the General’s daring and brilliant strategy, of his amazing feats of warfare, of his hairbreadth escapes. One knew of him also as a profound and learned lawyer of varied experience. One recognised in him a statesman of marvellous insight and resource. Yet he stood there, a lithe, slim and active soldier, without any sign of care or endurance, with a dancing light of gaiety and interest in his eyes, his small mobile lips uttering these simple and graceful sentences, but without preoccupation or nervousness, or anxiety as to how his words would be received. . . .

‘He seemed to me the embodiment of grace and sympathy and freedom. He had no touch of resentment or suspicion about him. He was not there to conciliate or to ingra-

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tiate himself or to persuade. He was a friend among friends, entirely trustful and kindly and grateful, full of delight at the familiar scene and with all misunderstanding and hostility and passion swept away.'

Some of the physical facts given are not correct. Smuts did not look thirty. He was forty-seven and he looked forty-seven. His beard did not curl, and his hair was growing thin on top. He could not be described as little. He was five feet ten and a half inches—to-day he stoops and is about five feet ten. He was not slim. He weighed what he has weighed since the Boer War and weighs to-day: twelve and a half stone. He has never been an artistic speaker. He has learnt to speak without effort (except that he cannot disguise his ineptitude at something that does not interest him—something sporting or social) and his rather plangent voice is easily audible and comes particularly well over the air. On a subject that matters to him, on a great subject, he is a sincere and moving—even a poetic—speaker, but he is often undone by that style which also fatally lures Mr. Lloyd George, as this example from *War Memoirs*, Volume III, may demonstrate: 'Every millimetre of the liberated earth was rent deeply by the cruel claws of war and reddened by the blood of the liberating troops. France . . . was bleeding from every vein, still on her feet, facing the foe, but staggering.'

Smuts is capable of striking and original metaphor, but he is also capable of 'the dark forces of revolution gathering in the background', 'the gaunt spectre of want or even starvation stalking through the land. . . .'

Yet this very habit of metaphor must have added to the poignantly romantic impression he created on wartime England, which, indeed, still lives. It must have made him seem, in those abnormal days when people, in their spiritual sickness, saw portents and angels in the sky, like a pro-

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phetic messenger. Even his un-English accent must have added to this impression.

There was, generally speaking, this effect he gave of being something arrived from elsewhere—unused and strong—to help.

Smuts still has the air of being tireless. To this day he looks clinically and vitally fresh; not at all younger than his years, but rested and ready—now!

Partly the reason for this ever fresh look is the simple physical fact that he has a very fair wind-reddened skin, but there is the more fundamental fact that he refuses to be tired. His recurrent malaria does not stop him from working. No minor illness stops him. Even his way of resting after a mountain climb is merely not to climb so fast. And his way of resting from mental labour is to labour on a different subject.

His eyes were described by T. P. O'Connor: 'His strange eyes . . . a cold clear blue, steely to hardness, brilliant, almost dazzling, almost affrighting.'

His eyes are bleaker to-day.

In manner he is still, as A. C. Benson found him, restrained, dignified, responsive, courtly, gay, friendly, alert and energetic—all at the same time. It also remains true that he is unsuspicious and forgiving—partly out of principle, and partly because he will not trouble himself to be otherwise.

It is in this mood of avoidance, of instinctively shutting his mind to the disagreeable—a mood which is his one form of laziness—that Smuts does nothing when he is derided or threatened, and sometimes also when others are threatened.

The description by A. C. Benson is of Smuts getting the LL.D. at Cambridge, his old University. The Public Orator called him, 'like the younger Scipio, our Second Africanus'.

Everywhere in the British Isles they were offering him

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the distinctions of their universities; their public honours; and the freedom of their cities. They could not do enough for him, not ask enough of him.

### 4

A fortnight after the first meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet Smuts—not merely a speaker of otherworldly things, but its only member who had handled both conflicting nations and armies in the field—was sent on a mission to Belgium and France. In this fortnight he had impressed himself on the Imperial War Cabinet as, after Mr. Lloyd George, the most significant of its members; he had made a number of striking speeches; he had become the most sought-after figure in social London; and embittered admirals, generals and statesmen (they were all embittered—it seemed against one another, but, in truth, against Fate) had defended to him their failures, or urged on him their passionate ideas.

The earliest apologia came from Lord Fisher.

‘It may amuse you,’ suggested Fisher in his spectacular writing (like the signatures of cinema stars), ‘a letter I wrote last December—I enclose a copy which you had best burn!’

‘I also enclose a paper on submarines that I gave the P.M. six months before the war! *It was scoffed at.* . . . Will you fix some day and hour when you can come to 36 Berkeley Sq. for half an hour to allow me to say the things I can’t write?’

‘My beloved Friend’ (said the enclosed letter). . . ‘General Botha made a speech extolling Smuts’ generalship in East Africa and wishing he could be employed in France!’

‘I cut it out and said “*Why not?*”, and how splendid if Botha was made Secretary for War! For he also did marvellously in German South-West Africa, and I believe Bonar Law splendidly pressed for Botha to be made a Field Marshal. Wouldn’t it have been lovely? *Smuts in France,*

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*and Botha at War Office!* And the Germans so puzzled at their stabbing them in the back instead of attacking them, as desired by the Germans, in the front! And Smuts would walk along the seashore to Antwerp covered by the British Fleet and would land a million Russians on the Pomeranian coast (as in the time of Frederick the Great) only eighty-two miles from Berlin! and *infinitely easier* to land a million Russians in Pomerania than half a million of "Allied mixture" at Salonica! The Baltic has no terrors for us with our new satanic measures! No more d—d silly talk now about "*civilised warfare*"! Shall your women be ravished or not (and deported as slaves *à la* Belgium), which is the sure fate of England if her Fleet should be wrecked! *You've got to get on quick!* You've removed the sure man of victory from the sea in taking Sir John Jellicoe away from the Grand Fleet, a *most criminal* act to bolster up Balfour's (effete admiralty?) administration. *You'd better push on ashore!*

'Now, where we see a German, there we go! But isn't it rather a good dodge to go where the Germans don't expect you? and hit them in the back? Remember, it's *very desirable* to get *the Russians* into Berlin! NOT THE FRENCH OR ENGLISH. You'd get any terms you liked then for Peace, including every ton of German shipping, which is what England wants as her share!

'I believe I sent a "repeat" of my letter about Smuts and Botha to the Highest Quarters! Very "MAD" I admit! *It's the mad things that come off in war!*

Napoleonic in Audacity!

Cromwellian in Thoroughness!

Nelsonic in Execution!

Big Conceptions and Quick Decisions!

Think in Oceans!

Shoot at Sight!

*(Have we had any of these above things???)*

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‘I don’t want to blow my own trumpet, but sending Admiral von Spee and all his Fleet to the bottom is the one and only case of real victory in this war, as Winston Churchill owned up in a lovely letter! (Whatever else he, Churchill, may be he is, as Rosebery says, “*magnanimous!*”)’

‘It saved Africa, as von Spee would have sent Botha and his expedition to the bottom of the sea, and our African squadron under Sir H. King-Hall to the bottom as von Spee sent Cradock to the bottom.

‘No matter what may be the cause, I am at present “knocked out”! And it’s just too silly to fuss about it! And let us pray the German Submarine Menace will be quickly dealt with—the blockade made real—that our paucity of mines may be made good—that our strategy may be more imaginative—our Secret Intelligence not German, and our Construction Policy not Folly! I am not a Deserter! I’m an Outcast!

‘As the old Romans said:

“*Non fugimus  
Nos fugamur.*”

‘Yours

‘Fisher.’

The paper on submarines which Fisher enclosed (‘There is a strong animus against the submarine—of course there is!’) described how the Navy in its time objected to steam engines, iron ships, breech-loading guns, the turbine and wireless. It quoted with derision the official remark of Lord Charles Beresford: ‘Submarines are only playthings’; emphasised in heavy print: ‘the submarine is the coming type of war vessel for sea fighting’; and demanded ‘What is it that the coming of the submarine really means? It means that the whole foundation of our traditional naval strategy



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which has served us so well in the past has been broken down. . . .’

Still another letter, which began by blessing Smuts for his words at Edinburgh, said: ‘Our authorities are not mastering the German submarine menace. Imagine if our Army cannot win the war before our Navy loses it! A Navy so supreme in power as to be able to face all the navies of the world combined!’

‘(I hope the censor won’t get hold of this letter!!!)

*‘We want Imagination and Audacity!’*

‘This is a war of APPARATUS.’

Another paper came too that elaborated the letter’s complaints, repeated the customary aphorisms, and demanded new-type submarines, more self-propelled barges, the winning of the Bay inside the Scaw and the recapture of Antwerp.

‘The British Army (it said) must work along the sea-coast as outlined in the autumn of 1914 (and agreed to by Sir J. French).

‘An immense cloud of aircraft is *imperative*. (There ought NOW to have been *thousands!!!*)

‘Prodigious minelaying facilities must now be instantly begun (the Admiralty apathy for two years has been CRIMINAL).

‘An *Armada* of “submarine-proof” craft for attack purposes will take five months. (*I am speaking to book in this matter.*)

‘The crumbling of Russia “dishes” for the immediate present the Baltic Project, but who knows but what the Russian Army may not revivify! (St. Just cut off the heads of generals in the French Revolution and got an invincible army in consequence!)

‘For two years the Admiralty Building Policy has had no aim. *It has none now! An instant Big Change* is vital!’

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‘As repeatedly affirmed—This war both by Land and Sea is solely a question of

“APPARATUS”!

always presuming that d—d fools are not going to be entrusted with the Apparatus when provided!

*‘The Army may not win the war  
Before the Navy loses it!’*

Smuts’ mission early in April of 1917 was to see the King of the Belgians, the French President, and the state of the war on the Western Front.

### 5

What Smuts chiefly discussed with Painlevé was war aims, and Painlevé told him that in preparation for possible overtures from the enemy, France and England should consider at once their respective minimum and essential demands. He asked Smuts then about the captured African colonies, and Smuts assured him that the retention of German South-West Africa was necessary for the Union’s security and German South-West Africa could therefore not be returned to Germany. And though (said Smuts) the Union’s relation to German East Africa was not equally intimate, a German East Africa in possession of Germany, coupled with German submarines, would not only allow Germany to realise her dream of a great African Empire, but would also jeopardise British sea power in the South Atlantic and India.

He found the King of the Belgians living at his Headquarters in depressing surroundings and very despondent. The unnecessary prolongation of war, the King told him, and the horrors already undergone and still to undergo, were crimes for which history would surely hold the states-

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men of the day responsible, and he thought the Allies should have been more ready to make peace when President Wilson suggested it. He wondered what was going to happen to Belgium—even the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine should not, he declared, be put on the same level of urgency as Belgium, and Smuts assured him that the restoration of Belgium was His Majesty's Government's primary war aim above all others, and that no other attitude would be tolerated by British public opinion. . . .

Smuts inspected the South African troops in France, received French and Belgian decorations, and returned to England to set out his thoughts on the position, conduct and prospects of the war.

Mr. Lloyd George thinks these thoughts were influenced by Haig, and Smuts does seem at this stage (a few weeks after his arrival in England) to have been impressed by certain conceptions of the Haig-Robertson school: for instance, their feeling that the French should be compelled to do more; that an offensive was necessary—if for no other purpose—to maintain French activity; that British policy was being subordinated to French policy. To this day he has a feeling that the French too strongly dominate the policy of Europe.

Yet, in his main principles, Smuts soon took his stand beside Mr. Lloyd George. Not only by admiration and reason, but by temperament and philosophy, he was bound to feel, with Mr. Lloyd George, that all fronts were one battle-front, and that victory of the whole might come as easily from the side as from the centre. It was even his Boer inheritance, his Boer experience, to feel this way. From the Zulu Chaka the Boers had derived their system of flank attacks: of attacking in the shape of a bull's horns before thrusting at the middle. In the Boer War Smuts had practised this system. He came to apply it to the Palestine campaign. What could be done in a battle could be done, he

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felt, in a campaign. And what could be done in a campaign could be done in a war of many fronts. Arguing from this base, Smuts agreed with Mr. Lloyd George in thinking that the enemy ought to be attacked, not (as the formal school of soldiers believed) at his strongest but at his weakest. In this particular instance he went even further than Mr. Lloyd George, for where Mr. Lloyd George urged a campaign against either the Austrians or the Turks, Smuts concentrated simply on the Turks—since the Turks were weakest of all.

### 6

Robertson, like Fisher, wrote often and urgently to Smuts.

Here is an extract from a letter Smuts received from him on his return from the Western Front.

‘We went there (to Salonika) in the face of all military advice, French as well as British, although Joffre gave in to his government against his better judgment.

‘The expedition was wrong from the start and it will be wrong until the end, and it has always been and still is for purely French political purposes. Last autumn we sent further troops there to please the French, in a futile effort to assist Roumania. We were told that if we did not send them it would mean the downfall of the French government, and we have been told so every time the question has come up. . . .

‘If we do not mind we shall lose the war in our vain attempts to bolster up the French government. . . .

‘For more than a year I have been endeavouring to get our government to take greater control over the war. . . . The issue of this war depends more upon us than upon anyone else. We are also contributing far more to it than anyone else is doing. The collapse of Russia and the increased submarine activity are imposing a still greater strain upon

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us. For some reason or other our government constantly fail to insist upon having their own way. . . . We have got to be firm. We shall certainly run the risk of losing the war unless we take a firm line and assume much greater control. The attempt to win the war by constantly giving in to unsound French proposals is folly.

‘The proper thing for us to do is to come away from Salonika altogether. Perhaps this is not possible for the moment, but we need not on that account increase our liabilities there in the manner now proposed by the French. . . .’

## Chapter III

### THE REPORTS ON THE WESTERN FRONT

#### I

**S**mutts opened his report, which is dated 25.4.17, by limiting the British war aims to an essential and practical minimum.

'Britain was fighting', he said, 'for destruction of the German colonial system with a view to the future security of all communications vital to the British Empire'; for 'tearing off from the Turkish Empire all parts that might afford Germany opportunity of expansion to the Far East and of endangering our position as an Asiatic Power'—two objects which, in effect, had been achieved.

She was also fighting for the restoration of conquered territories and the crushing of German militarism in Europe—two objects which remained to be achieved.

As yet, England was the only ally, he said, that had gained anything. The other Allies had all been losers. Germany had gained more, relatively, than the Allies 'and, unless defeated now, will become again at some future date an even more serious menace to us than it has been in the past. How has this defeat to be brought about? . . . It will not be merely or even entirely a military defeat. A certain substantial measure of defeat will be necessary . . . as a lasting lesson to Prussian militarism. . . .

'But greater forces are fighting for us than our armies. This war will be settled largely by the imponderables—by

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the forces of public opinion all over the world which have been mobilised by German outrages, by fear on the part of the governing classes of Central Europe of the dark forces of revolution already gathering in the background, by the gaunt spectre of want or even starvation already stalking through the land; and by all those consequential factors of morale to which even Napoleon attached more military importance than to the power of his armies.'

It was a week later that Smuts, in receiving the freedom of the City of London, gave a mystic meaning to these imponderables which he then called 'silent, invisible forces'. In his report he meant the forces of public opinion that were to be drawn to the Allies' side by exposing the Germans' methods of barbarism and emphasising Britain's traditional generous policy in domestic affairs. . . .

He analysed then the military position. The scope of military operations, he said, had narrowed down as the war progressed. Earlier chances of offensive were past. Brilliant ideas, once possible, could not be put to the test. There was the First Sea Lord's warning about the serious position in the navy and shipping world. Which overseas campaign was the least promising of attainment and made the heaviest demands on British shipping? Salonika! It had failed in its original intention, and become a military and political embarrassment. . . .

He went on to discuss the possibility of detaching Bulgaria from the Central Powers by territorial baits, and Turkey through the conquest of Palestine. If there was no prospect of such detachment of Bulgaria, there seemed to him no military reason to linger on the Bulgarian front, except to cover Greece, and this might be left to the French, Serbs and Italians. He thought a Palestine campaign offered 'interesting military and political possibilities'. 'As it progresses to Jerusalem and Damascus it will threaten the Turkish Em-

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pire more than anything yet undertaken except the Dardanelles and Gallipoli.'

He considered the situation on the Western Front.

### 2

He wrote:

'I have always looked upon it as a misfortune . . . that the British forces have become so entirely absorbed by this Front. The result now is that in a theatre mainly of the enemy's choosing the two most important armies of the Entente are locked up in front of almost impregnable positions. It is essential to our ends that we should keep the initiative and offensive, but both are enormously difficult in the situation in which we are placed on this Front. I have no confidence that we can break through the enemy line on any large scale.

'No doubt with our predominance of heavy artillery we can batter in any selected portion of the enemy line, but in every case so far we have been unable to advance for more than a comparatively short distance, and there is no reason to think that this state of affairs will materially alter in the near future unless some unforeseen calamity overtakes the enemy. I found the spirit of our officers and men on this Front magnificent in its confidence and determination. But my visit has only strengthened my impression that a decision on this Front can only be reached by a process of remorselessly wearing down the enemy. And that is a very slow, costly and even dangerous process for us no less than for the enemy, and threatening both with exhaustion of man power as the process of attrition goes on. Victory in this kind of warfare is the costliest possible to the victor.

'My visit to this Front has also impressed me with the undesirability of the present position both as regards the supreme military direction and the state of our strategic re-



serves. On both these points I wrote my views, immediately after my return, to the chief of the Imperial General Staff, and they have been very largely incorporated into his important memorandum of 17.4.17 to the War Cabinet.

'I repeat:

'We entered the war in a very small way with a small military force and not as a principal combatant, but rather as an auxiliary to France. This fact was reflected in our general military policy which was of necessity one of great modesty and almost complete subordination to that of France. Our army took its position side by side with the French Army in defence of French soil, and, as our forces continued to grow, we proceeded to take over more and more of the French line. The modesty of our policy and the subordination of our role to that of France have continued notwithstanding the fact that during the last two years the whole situation has been transformed and we are now the principal opponent of the Central Empires, and the financial, naval, and, to a large extent, the military mainstay of the Entente.

'This anomalous situation is now reflected in three curious respects:

'(1) While our army is defending the soil of France as if it were part of the French forces, the French have taken the military and diplomatic lead in the Balkans and Greece, and are either making mistakes which are seriously embarrassing the success of the war in those parts, or, if success is achieved, are after the war going to enjoy all the prestige in the Balkans which should legitimately have gone to the most powerful and disinterested member of the Entente.

'(2) The strategy of our army on the Western Front having to conform to French direction may, from a review of the military situation as a whole, not be a sound one, and may pay an undue regard to merely French considerations.

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‘(3) But the most serious result of all is that our whole army (with the exception of the forces conducting campaigns elsewhere) has been locked up on the Western Front and we have no great strategic reserve left for any unforeseen contingencies. For no doubt good reason . . . we have gradually shouldered more and more of the burden of defending France, and so both the French and English armies have become pinned down along the Western Front. . . .’

He suggested accordingly that the French should be made to defend their own soil while the English accumulated a reserve to meet any emergency or consolidate a success.

‘We should, after the present offensive, resume the independence of our military direction; we should, above all, aim at the liberation from the Western Front at an early date of at least one of our armies, which should remain in the North of France or the neighbourhood of the Belgian border as a strategic reserve to be used only when necessary in the case of grave contingencies. . . .’

He further deprecated the French desire for a defensive, instead of the present offensive, policy. ‘This, coupled with the fact that the enemy forces are now more numerous than ever before; that they have conquered large parts of the Entente territory which they are still holding; and that the submarine campaign, already so grave, is growing in violence, would look very much like our defeat and dishearten all the Entente nations whose discouragement might precipitate a serious peace movement among one or more of them. And once the rot sets in, it might be difficult to stop it. No doubt the weight of America would be felt in 1918, but the danger is that we may not get there unless active operations are prosecuted and a continuance of military success buoys up the spirit of the nations to fight on till America can come in as a decisive factor. . . .’

For these reasons he felt that something, ‘however diffi-

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cult the task,' would 'have to be done to continue an offensive'.

His suggestion for an offensive movement was that an attempt should be made rather to recover the north coast of Belgium and deprive the Germans of their submarine bases at Zeebrugge and Ostend, than to continue the present offensive on French soil.

He was also, it may be recapitulated, attracted by the 'very interesting military and even political possibilities' of a Palestine campaign.

He was offered the Palestine Command.

## Chapter IV

### HE DEFINES THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

#### I

There are still times when Smuts wonders if he did right to refuse the Palestine Command. He looks over his life—his work and dreams—and asks himself what has come of them. Does the philosophical system he calls Holism count in the world? Is the League of Nations fulfilling its destiny? There is also his work for a Union—not merely of South Africa, but of South Africans—within the British Commonwealth. He links his thoughts of South Africa and England to his thoughts of the world (it is his habit, as well as his philosophy, to think in wholes) and he sees everywhere the same frustration, and if it were not his creed to hope he might despair.

He has twice before in his life despaired: the first time was after the Boer War, and the second time after the Great War. He also knew a sense of personal humiliation (of which his colleagues remained ignorant) when—coming back to South Africa from the Great War, and finding his own people against him, and other parties significantly growing, and his parliamentary following uncertain in their support—when in 1924 he went to the country and the country decisively rejected his leadership. But a sense of personal defeat (though never the chagrin of inactivity and helplessness) he could overcome: he could write Holism and merge himself with all creation and feel a personal defeat to be no-

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thing. How can a man hearten himself in days like these? Smuts has developed the habit of saying in his speeches: 'I am coming to the end.' And although, if he is put to it, he adds, 'Still, the end may not be so near. I feel myself as strong as I ever was,' there are obviously now times when he cannot declare, as readily as in England in 1917, 'I am full of courage.' And it is then, thinking of South Africa and the League and the Old Testament and the Bible stories of his boyhood and the rebirth of Palestine, and seeing nowhere else any good from the war, that he wonders whether, after all, he would not prefer, to the memories he has, the thought that he entered Jerusalem.

### 2

He discussed the question of the Palestine Command with Robertson, Chief of the Imperial Staff, and this is how he described the result:

'The Prime Minister', he wrote, 'was immensely interested in this war front. He was strongly under the impression that Palestine might be made a decisive feature of the war; that Turkey might be broken and sent out of the war and that this might be the beginning of the end for the whole German Front. He was very anxious that a determined offensive should be made in Palestine, and it was with that object in view he offered me the command. . . . I asked Sir William Robertson what he thought about the matter, and he said to me quite frankly that if I were to accept the offer under the impression that something first class could be done in Palestine, I would be making a great mistake, and he would dissuade me from accepting the command under such an impression. He said that it had been an obsession with Mr. Lloyd George for a long time that the war was to be won on one or other of the minor fronts and not on the Western Front. Mr. Lloyd George, he said, was for ever

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talking of concentrating on some other front in order to win the war, but the Military Authorities were entirely opposed to that view, and every first-class soldier was agreed that the war could only be won on the main front, i.e., the Western; and he thought it would be a great mistake to weaken an effort on that front in order to make a splash elsewhere. He thought that Palestine could at best remain only a "side-show", and whatever success I could achieve there would not materially affect the fortunes of the war.

'The impression Sir William Robertson made on my mind was that I would not have the support of the War Office in getting the necessary men and material that would be wanted to make a first-class push in Palestine, and that if I went there I would probably be shut up there for the rest of the war. Mr. Lloyd George would have the full obstruction of the War Office in any of his efforts to help me, and I might be left stranded there. In view of the attitude of the War Office, I finally declined the offer. Mr. Lloyd George often afterwards told me that I had made a great mistake, and it is a question whether he was not right, because I saw afterwards how tremendously keen he remained on this Palestine question; and it is quite possible that, if I had undertaken the job in May 1917, something quite spectacular might have been done long before it was actually done by Allenby in the autumn of 1918, and it is quite conceivable that the war might have been shortened appreciably by a break-down of the Turkish forces on the Palestine front.'

'Had he consented', Mr. Lloyd George adds to this, 'to take in hand the Palestine Campaign, I have not the least doubt that it would, under his charge, have been one of our most successful efforts'.

It was in the following terms Smuts refused the Palestine Command:

'Dear Prime Minister,' he wrote to Mr. Lloyd George on the 31st of May, 1917, 'I thank you very sincerely for having offered me the command of the Egyptian Army. It is an honour which I deeply appreciate and would most gladly have accepted on personal grounds. As I have to my great regret to decline accepting it, I wish in a few words to set out my reasons for doing so.

'The most careful consideration has only strengthened my first impression that the Palestine Campaign will be a mistake unless at least the capture of Jerusalem is made a reasonable certainty and all the reinforcements necessary for that purpose are assured. A limited advance which stopped short of the capture of Jerusalem would serve no particular purpose, and might easily be a disappointment to the public and appear as a fresh failure. So long as the Russians are inactive or retiring in Armenia the capture of Jerusalem would be a most serious undertaking which would probably require more troops than I could fairly ask for from other fronts. Under these circumstances I feel convinced that the role of this army is going to be mainly a defensive one, at any rate, until Russia and America can effectively come in on other fronts next year.

'I know you would not wish me to accept the Command in a defensive campaign for which other officers would be more suitable than I am.

'The liberation of Palestine from the Turkish yoke appeals to me as strongly as it does to you on historical and human grounds, and if I had been in any doubt your friendly pressure, which I deeply value, would have decided me.

'I have been torn between this strong personal desire on the one hand to accept the offer and do my bit at the front and, on the other hand, my equally strong conviction that

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our present military situation on all fronts does not really justify an offensive campaign for the capture of Jerusalem and the occupation of Palestine, however highly desirable these points may be.

‘I trust you will not blame me for having decided to act on broad grounds of policy rather than on my personal wishes. . . .’

Not much more than a month before, Smuts had seemed to be in favour of a campaign in Palestine and the capture of Jerusalem. Later it fell to him to organise a Palestine campaign—after General Allenby had already entered Jerusalem and, proclaiming ‘To the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Blessed. . . . The defeat inflicted upon the Turks by the troops under my command has resulted in the occupation of your city by my forces,’ had promised to guard the sacred soil. Now, because of the Russians, and the general military situation, and chiefly Robertson’s advice, he thought such a campaign unjustified.

But does not something else—something beside a change of opinion, a change in the war, the failing Russians, bad advice—seem to emerge from Smuts’ troubled words to Mr. Lloyd George? A sort of ectoplasm—the spirit of those words? A sort of suggestion that, much as he wanted to go to Palestine, he wanted still more not to go to Palestine?

He did both want to go, and not to go, to Palestine. To this day he asks himself whether he should (‘To have entered Jerusalem! What a memory!’) or should not (‘Yet everything was happening in London’) have gone. ‘The liberation of Palestine from the Turkish yoke appeals to me as strongly as it does to you on historical and human grounds.’ Smuts has a particular feeling about Palestine. Because of what he has done for the Jews, a strip of earth they have bought in the Valley of Zebulun is called to-day Ramat Jochanan Smuts. And this gives him a great romantic satis-



faction: he likes to think there exists in the Holy Land—and Mount Carmel overlooks it—a piece of Palestinian soil called after a Boer born in Malmesbury, Cape.

But in May 1917 he had been only two months in England after a year in the swamps and deserts and forests and mountains of German East Africa; he had always done things connected only with Africa; he had spent the forty-seven years of his avid life in what was spoken of as a side-show. Now, amazingly, he was in the thick of the world; and as, at twenty-four, he had disputed against Plato, Bacon and Hegel, he wanted to match himself against the leading opponent: not East Africa or Turkey, but Germany herself—to play, so to speak, on the Centre Court.

He could not bring himself to go to another side-show, even if that side-show was Palestine—and especially if, while everything was happening in London, it meant sitting out the war there on the defensive. 'I know you would not wish me to accept the Command in a defensive campaign for which other officers would be more suitable than I am.'

The Imperial War Cabinet was due to adjourn until next year. Before there was any talk of Palestine or the Irish Convention, Smuts had already begun to discuss his return to South Africa. His passage was booked. South African papers were saying he ought to go home. English papers—English statesmen—people at large—were saying he was needed in England and ought not to be allowed to go home. Failing Palestine, failing the Irish Convention, how, they pondered, could one induce Smuts to remain in England?...

Mr. Lloyd George offered him a seat in the War Cabinet. Unlike any other statesman in the Imperial War Cabinet (whose importance in Mr. Lloyd George's eyes may be gauged from the fact that it held fourteen meetings in its six weeks as against three hundred held in 1917 by the War Cabinet itself); unlike, too, Mr. Asquith, Smuts was asked

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to sit in the special Cabinet whose business it was to conduct the war.

### 4

If there were people in England nonplussed when the rumour got about that Smuts had been invited to join the War Cabinet, it was not that they doubted Smuts.

No one questioned his capacity. By the end of May his colleagues knew that he stood alone among Dominion statesmen and was not surpassed by English statesmen; and the public had heard or read a series of extraordinary speeches. No one objected that he was a Boer, or might not be deeply loyal to England. His old enemies in the field were his strongest adherents.

In the middle of May, by permission of the King, there was a banquet held in Smuts' honour in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords. The Royal Gallery had not often before been used for such a purpose. Because it was war time, the courses numbered only five, and women served them. Lord French presided, against whose forces Smuts had opposed his few hundred guerrilla fighters in the old Boer days. The rulers of England came: among them Asquith, Haldane, Milner, Bryce, Harcourt, Crewe, Chaplin, Fisher, Beresford, Reading, Mond, Long, Birrell, Gladstone, Bonar Law, Robert Cecil, Barnes, Selborne, Buckmaster, Northcliffe, Redmond, Churchill, the Lord Chancellor. Mr. Lloyd George was away at the Irish Commission. Milner sat on Smuts' right hand.

The purpose of the banquet was to demonstrate two things: England's magnanimity to a great enemy, and the magnanimity of that enemy—no longer an enemy—to a great England.

French described Smuts as a soldier and told how 'day after day, week after week, month after month, our dis-

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tinguished guest, with every disadvantage in the way of numbers, arms, transport, equipment and supply, evaded all my attempts to bring him to decisive action'. Smuts spoke of the simple human feelings that survived even wars and told how, in the process of his struggle against French, he found himself in the mountain cleft called Murderer's Gap, and was the only one of his small company to escape alive; and how, later, he neglected to wreck a train in which French was pursuing him. . . .

Reciprocal compliments done, he proceeded to his business of the evening, which was to declare to the world his faith in the British Commonwealth of Nations, and define it.

Behind him was the picture of Wellington meeting Blucher after Waterloo.

'Do not forget in these times', he said, 'the British Commonwealth of Nations. Do not forget that larger world which is made up of all the nations that belong to the Empire. Bear in mind that, after all, Europe is not so large, and will not always continue to loom so large as at present. Even now in the struggle the pace of Europe is being permanently slowed down. Your Empire is spread all over the world, and even where the pace is slowed down in one portion it is accelerated in another, and you have to keep the whole before you in order to judge fairly and sanely the factors which affect the whole. . . .

'This great commonwealth to which we belong is peculiarly situated. It is not a compact territory; it is dependent for its very existence on world-wide communications, which must be maintained or this Empire goes to pieces.

'In the past thirty years you see what has happened. Everywhere on your communications Germany has settled down; everywhere upon your communications of the whole globe you will find a German colony here and there, and the day would have come when your Empire would have been in

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very great jeopardy from your lines of communication being cut.

‘Now, one of the by-products of this war has been that the whole world outside Europe has been cleared of the enemy. Germany has been swept from the seas and from all the continents except Central Europe. . . . And, therefore, you are now in this position—almost providentially brought to this position—that once more you can consider the problem of your future as a whole. When peace comes to be made you have all these cards in your hand, and you can go carefully into the position of what is necessary for your future safety as an Empire, and you can say, so far as it is possible under war circumstances, what you are going to keep and what you are going to give away. . . .

‘I feel when the time comes for peace we should bear in mind not only Central Europe but the whole British Empire. As far as we are concerned, we do not wish this war to have been fought in vain. We have not fought for material gain, or for territory; we have fought for security and the future. . . .

‘There remains’, continued Smuts, defining the British Commonwealth of Nations, giving it the name for the first time that night, ‘there remains the other question of the future constitutional relations and readjustments in the British Empire. . . . The British Empire is much more than a state. I think the very expression “Empire” misleading, because it makes people think as if we were one entity, one unity. . . . We are not an Empire. Germany is an Empire, and so was Rome, and so is India; but we are a system of nations, a community of states and of nations far greater than any Empire that has ever existed. . . . We are not one nation, or state, or empire, but we are a whole world by ourselves, consisting of many nations and states and all sorts of communications under one flag. We are a system

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of states—not only a static system, a stationary system, but a dynamic system, growing, evolving, all the time towards new destinies. Here you have a kingdom with a number of crown colonies; besides that you have large protectorates like Egypt, which is an Empire in itself, which was one of the greatest Empires in the world. Besides that you have great dependencies like India—also an Empire in itself, one of the oldest civilisations in the world . . . and beyond that we come to the so-called Dominions, a number of nations and states almost sovereign, almost independent, who govern themselves . . . who all belong to this group, this community of nations which I prefer to call the British Commonwealth of Nations. Now you see that no political ideas we have evolved in the past, no nomenclature, will apply to this world which is comprised of the British Empire. . . . I think the man who would discover the real appropriate name for the system of entities would be doing a great service not only to this country, but to constitutional theory.

‘The question is, how are you going to provide for the future government of this group of nations? It is an entirely new problem. If you want to see how great it is, you must take the United States in comparison. There you find what is essentially one nation, not perhaps in the fullest sense, but more and more growing into one; one big state, consisting of subordinate parts . . . one national state over one big contiguous area. . . .

‘Compare with that state of facts the enormous system comprised in the British Empire of nations all over the world; some independent, living under diverse conditions, and all growing towards greater nations than they are at present. You can see at once that the solution which has been found practicable in the case of the United States probably never will work under our system. That is what I feel in all Empires of the past, and even in the United States—

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the effort has been towards forming one nation. All the nations that we have known in the past and that exist to-day are founded on the idea of assimilation, of trying to force different human material through one mould so as to form one nation. Your whole idea and basis is entirely different. You do not want to standardise the nations of the British Empire. You want to develop them into greater nationhood. These younger communities, the offspring of the Mother Country, or territories like that of my own people, which have been annexed after various vicissitudes of war—all these you want, not to be moulded to any common pattern, but to develop according to the principles of self-government and freedom and liberty.

‘The question arises: How are you going to keep this commonwealth of nations together? . . . It seems to me that there are two potent factors you must rely upon for the future. The first is your hereditary kingship, the other is our conference system. . . . You cannot make a republic of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

‘If you had to elect a President, he would have to be a President, not only here in these islands, but all over the British Empire—in India and in the Dominions—the President who would be really representative of all these peoples; and here you would be facing an absolutely insoluble problem. The theory of the constitution is that the King is not your King, but the King of all of us, ruling over every part of the whole commonwealth of nations; and if his place should be taken by anybody else, that somebody will have to be elected under a process which it will pass the wit of man to devise. . . .’

He outlined a scheme of Imperial conferences: meetings of Imperial representatives for the discussion of those matters which concerned all parts of the Empire in common, that causes of friction and misunderstanding might be pre-

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vented or removed, common Imperial policy laid down, and a greater publicity brought about.

‘After the great catastrophe which has overtaken Europe, nations will in future want to know more about their foreign policy. . . . Too much stress has been laid in the past on instruments of government. . . . Where you build up a common patriotism and a common ideal, the instruments of government will not be a thing that matters so much as the spirit which actuates the whole. . . .’

### 5

Smuts’ words that are here quoted come partly from his speech as he delivered it and partly from the published version of his wartime speeches, in the foreword of which he wrote that as the Roman idea had guided European civilisation for almost two thousand years, so the newer ideas embedded in the British system might, when carried to their full development, guide civilisation in the future. His countrymen who were against him in South Africa saw in those words the very declaration of his national abandonment. They compared him with General Hertzog in the following terms:

‘Smuts among Lords in London.

Hertzog, among his fellow South Africans—at Stellenbosch.

Smuts, the bearer of Imperialism.

Hertzog, the prophet of his folk’s freedom.

Imperialism means subservience.

Nationalism, our freedom. . . .’

In England the expressions ‘chivalrous’, ‘knightly’, ‘original’, ‘rational’, ‘subtle’, ‘magical’, ‘imaginative’, ‘historic’, ‘classical’ and ‘prophetic’ were used to describe Smuts and his speech. ‘I would sooner have made your speech to-night,’ Lord Harcourt wrote to him, ‘than anything I have ever

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done or attained in my life. . . . Your argument for the hereditary kingship of the British Commonwealth was unanswerable and of incalculable value. Your policy of consultation and co-operation plus complete autonomy is so absolutely the policy I have always pursued and propounded (at and after the Imperial Conference of 1911) that I am naturally delighted. . . .’

The speech was printed as a parliamentary paper, and as a pamphlet in America. It was translated for neutral countries. One firm alone of English bookstall contractors took a quarter of a million copies. . . .

One has to remember the times in which it was made. ‘Gott strafe England’ was Germany’s special prayer, and who could tell yet whether the Lord might not answer it, and where the British Empire would be to-morrow? Who could think of a to-morrow at all?

Now here stood one, come from another sphere to tell the people of England with reasoned confidence that their Empire was the greatest known in history; an Empire of Empires, containing some of the greatest ancient Empires and others just beginning; a world itself in which every part grew separately yet all grew together; which deserved to prevail and would.

They called him in England the Orator for the Empire, and Mr. A. G. Gardiner wrote an article about him in the *Daily News* (2.6.17) which suggested that he might be indeed the saviour of the Empire, and which caused Mr. Gardiner himself to be referred to in South Africa as ‘Gardiner M’Bongo’—M’Bongo being the native term for the praise-maker who stalks before a chief calling him: Great Elephant, Earth Shaker, Stabber of Heaven. He described how at a discussion with the ambassador of a foreign Power, it was agreed that among all the world figures ‘upon whom history would seize as the most significant products of the



struggle' Smuts had most surely a place. . . . 'It is not too much to say that the speeches he has delivered in this country since his arrival have done more than any utterances of the time to clear the issue, and moralise our cause. He has both deepened our purpose and cleansed it. . . . There is no personal question of more moment than the future of General Smuts. He is far too valuable an asset to be wasted in this vast emergency. He knows how to make war and, still better, he knows how to make peace. He represents the ideal that the world is seeking to establish and the larger vision of all this tangle of circumstance. Is not his task clear? Mr. Lloyd George has scrapped the machinery of government in this country. . . . It is this surrender of the interests of democracy to the enemies of democracy that is the ultimate root of the distrust that prevails, and the discontent that has gone so deep in the Labour world. The inclusion of General Smuts in the War Cabinet would go far to remove this distrust. It would inspire confidence where no confidence is left, and it would give us the assurance that the peace we sought would be the peace which the world desired. . . .'

## Chapter V

### HE ENTERS THE WAR CABINET

#### I

So it will be seen that it was not because people in England doubted Smuts' statesmanship, or his loyalty as a Boer to the British Empire, that some were staggered to hear he had been asked to enter the War Cabinet. There were subtler reasons; To begin with, the other Dominion statesmen who had come to attend the Imperial War Conference—would it not be an affront to them and their Dominions if from among them Smuts alone were chosen to sit in the War Cabinet? To this objection there was an answer: Smuts had the peculiar qualification of being not only a statesman, but a soldier.

Again, why of all soldiers in the Empire should Smuts alone have been invited to join the British War Cabinet—Smuts and not, in his day, Kitchener? Clearly because he had the advantage of being not only a soldier, but a statesman.

Then the fact that no precedent existed for a man, not a member of either House, sitting in a British Cabinet. Here, too, there was an answer. The legal position was that the King invited whom he pleased to join his Cabinet, that, indeed, the Cabinet did not legally exist at all and was merely a matter of convenience.

Again his detachment; was it desirable to give power to a man who had no official position or responsibility? But this

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(they said in reply) was precisely his advantage. He had the freedom to do things English statesmen might not do; he could do such things on their behalf; in any emergency, in any business that fell into no regular department, there he was, a man of the most diverse experience and capacity, ready and able to undertake that emergency or business.

(The arrangement worked as was expected, and Smuts came to be called the handyman of the Empire. . . .)

But there was one objection no one could adequately answer—the objection of those who hated the idea of Smuts' attachment to Mr. Lloyd George because they hated Mr. Lloyd George.

These were the adherents of Asquith whom Mr. Lloyd George had dispossessed.

### 2

In November 1914 Mr. Asquith, Prime Minister at the outbreak of the war, created a War Council in which he sat together with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Foreign and Indian Secretaries, Kitchener, Secretary for War, and Mr. Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty.

In May 1915, brought to the final point by the disagreement between Fisher and Mr. Churchill at the Admiralty, the agitation for compulsory service and the desire to show that the government, no less than the nation, was mobilising, he formed a Coalition Ministry. Mr. Churchill was not in this Ministry, nor Haldane, who was accused of being pro-German. Mr. Lloyd George had the newly created post of Minister of Munitions; when Kitchener was drowned he took his place at the War Office; he was now recognised to be the most forceful man in England and his principle concerning the war was that the fight must be to a finish—to a knock-out.

In November 1915, Asquith said: 'We have had since a

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very early period of the war a body fluctuating in number from time to time, and which has varied in name—sometimes it has been called a War Council, sometimes a War Committee, sometimes it has gone by other designations—a body to which either general questions of State, or questions of strategy in particular areas or arenas, have been by the consent of the Cabinet referred'; and he announced accordingly the creation of a 'Strategic Cabinet of five': Balfour, Bonar Law, Mr. McKenna, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George and himself. This Cabinet came to vary in numbers and personnel, but it remained under the authority of the Government and Asquith always presided.

In May 1916 (despite the adverse decision of a Cabinet Committee presided over by Asquith) compulsory service went through and Sir John Simon, the Home Secretary, resigned. For other reasons Asquith lost other adherents—notably Sir Edward Carson. It began to be said by newspapers and people generally that Asquith was not the man to win the war; he lacked initiative (they said) and talked more than he acted.

Then on December 1st Mr. Lloyd George published a statement announcing that he could not stay in the Government unless the machinery for directing the war were 'drastically overhauled'; and he suggested the formation of a new sort of War Council, a small body including himself that was not to be hampered by the authority of the Cabinet, and that was not to contain Mr. Asquith, who had (said Mr. Lloyd George) enough other work to do as Prime Minister. Afterwards he thought that Asquith might be allowed to participate in a consultative capacity and to have a power of veto.

Asquith, having first offered to reconstruct his government, rejected Mr. Lloyd George's ultimatum.

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On December 5th Mr. Lloyd George resigned. The same evening Asquith also resigned. His chief Liberal colleagues, including Lord Grey of Falloden, resigned with him. Mr. Lloyd George became Prime Minister, and found time also to preside over the Cabinet.

When he invited Smuts to join the War Cabinet its other members were Curzon, Milner, Carson, Bonar Law and Barnes.

### 3

Among the people who had not wanted Smuts to go back to South Africa was Mrs. Asquith. As admirals and generals competed for his adherence, so did politicians.

'I know', Mrs. Asquith wrote to him before his future was yet decided, 'that I have made a new friend; and the further we can stretch our powers of love, the more grateful we should be. You are sane, clever and kind (a rare combination); don't go away just yet. My husband and I feel keenly that you should not leave us in these awful hours, days and months. We appear to be all right—we laugh, lunch and dine, but every telegram on the table, or official paper put into our hands, makes our hearts stop, and we say—"Which is dead of the two boys?" (both of whom have been in the last Western Offensive).

'Will you give me a photograph of yourself?—and, above all, I want you to write something in my most valued and private common-place book. Write *when* you like and *what* you like.'

The words Smuts wrote in Mrs. Asquith's private book were from Mommsen's *History of Rome* concerning Hannibal's suicide;

'On those whom the gods love they lavish infinite joys, and infinite sorrows.'

He might equally have written: 'On those whom the

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gods (if they exist) hate (if they care at all) they lavish (if they have the power) infinite joys (as it seems afterwards) and infinite sorrows (though only by contrast).' For after infinite joy mere normalcy is infinite sorrow ('The apprehension of the good gives but the greater feeling to the worse'), as after a hundred miles an hour, forty miles seems a standstill and one may well step from a car and be killed. . .

About the same time Smuts also wrote, for publication under a photograph;

'Let us have faith that Right is Might, and in that faith as to the end do our Duty.'

It will be seen that as, at twenty-five, he had spoken of how an old Greek watching Rhodes' ascent and fall 'would have become filled with melancholy and thought of Polycrates' ring', or quoted Solon's 'Call no man happy till his final day', so, at forty-seven, he could still not resist a bit of classical moralising; nor restrain the sort of upward yearning that even to-day, in his sixties, moves him towards Clough's 'Say not the struggle nought availeth', or Emily Brontë's 'No coward soul is mine', or even a thought from Mrs. Hemans. About Mrs. Hemans he is a little amused. He knows Mrs. Hemans' stature as a poet. He awaits a smile. He smiles himself as he finishes his quotation and announces 'that's Mrs. Hemans'.

But the truth is Mrs. Hemans has risen to the surface of his mind from half a century ago and has irresistibly emerged. In his very Commonwealth speech he approaches a regular peroration with: 'I hope and pray. . . . I believe, I verily believe. . . .' And it can also happen to him, in private talk, to analyse a situation more broadly and clearly than is in the power of any other living statesman, and reach his end with the grave words: 'You can take it from me, that work will never succeed. The man is small potatoes.'

Beside all Smuts' knowledge of philosophy, science, state-



"Let us have faith that Right  
is Might, and in that Faith  
to be and try to do our Duty."

*J. C. Smuts*

J. C. SMUTS, LONDON, 1917





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craft and literature; in company with the poems of Whitman, Shelley, Keats, Milton and Shakespeare; there stick to him, like people in his life too, words odd, old, poor, tired and unrejected.

It will also be seen that of Duty he speaks in middle age, as in youth and age, without embarrassment and again without regard to distinction of utterance.

What, however, he wrote beneath his portrait, he meant precisely. He did believe, he does to-day, in the power of a just cause. He remains the servant of Duty.

### 4

Mrs. Asquith was barely back from a visit in the country—Smuts had duly contributed to her collection—when rumours were about in London that Mr. Lloyd George had invited him to join the War Cabinet and he was going to do so.

On June 17th the London papers said he had done so.

‘My dear General Smuts,’ Mrs. Asquith wrote to him then, ‘In the *Westminster Gazette* to-night it says on the first page . . . that you have special qualifications for membership of the *War Cabinet*. I hope you will not let this statement remain uncontradicted. All the Lloyd-Georgites (anti-Asquithites) are overjoyed, and say to me, “There, you see *how* wrong you were! *He has joined Ll. G.* after all!’’

‘You might write a short letter to *The Times* saying you are only doing what you, and all the Imperial Conference Premiers and representatives do—attend the War Cabinet when you are asked to, but that you have *not* joined it. This would delight my husband and, as he is being deserted by another of his colleagues, I think he has every reason to believe that you will *never* desert him.

‘You have a fine loyal nature, and everything Henry

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could do in the past for your people he has done. He is the *most* loyal man in the world, as you know.

'One or two of our friends were very sad to-day, and said: "To think of a fine fellow like Smuts joining the War Cabinet, sitting with a man like Lloyd George, and men like Milner—who with all his qualities nearly lost us South Africa, and George Curzon, who thinks of no one but himself."

'Dear friend, do make your position clear . . .' she wrote again a month later;

'I see by to-day's *Times* the official announcement of your having joined the War Cabinet just in the same way as Sir Edward Carson has. If this is a lie you should contradict it. If it is true, you have changed your mind. It is constantly being said to me that you told me one thing (I told Henry and my own friends you had *not* joined the War Cabinet) and told the Government another thing. I say "no" and that you are as honest and trustworthy as I am.

'I shall see you at lunch to-morrow.

'Yours sincerely,

'Margot Asquith.'

It was now six weeks since Smuts had been a member of the War Cabinet—without pay and on the understanding that he was to be concerned with war operations and international matters but absolutely not with politics. When Mr. Lloyd George later asked him to regularise his position by becoming a member of Parliament he wrote: 'I sent a cable to General Botha whom I am bound to consult on such a matter. I have just received his reply that both he and his colleagues are against the step, that it would weaken my political position in South Africa, to which I intend to return as soon as the war is over, and that it would involve my resignation as Minister of Defence of South Africa, thus

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further weakening my connection with my political base in South Africa. I am unwilling to take steps with which my South African colleagues are not in accord or which might appear to weaken the sphere of my political activity. . . . In the meantime, you can continue to count on my most active support.'

His position in the War Cabinet never was regularised. It never became clear whether he was or was not exactly a Minister. Sometimes he was described as 'the unofficial seventh' or as Minister without Portfolio. Again it was pointed out that in his speeches he identified himself with his audience and not with the official Ministers, whom he called 'The Leaders'. In June Bonar Law told the House that Smuts had been invited, like the premiers of other Dominions, to attend meetings of the War Cabinet during his stay in England. In November Bonar Law said that Smuts spoke 'on exactly the same footing as any other Minister'.

There was only one thing quite clear about Smuts' connection with the War Cabinet. It worked. By the time Mrs. Asquith realised how things stood, Smuts had already done his full measure in it. As far back as June 8th the Cabinet had decided to meet the changed international position by reviewing past policies and planning new ones; to this end a small committee had been deputed to examine the naval, military and political situations; and on the committee, together with the Prime Minister, Curzon, Milner and Sir Maurice Hankey (the Cabinet's secretary), sat Smuts.

Mrs. Asquith gallantly forgave him. On her husband's death she wrote that of all her six thousand consolatory letters and telegrams Smuts' telegram touched her most.

## Chapter VI

### FLANDERS: AUTUMN, 1917

#### I

**T**he changed international position Smuts and his colleagues had to consider rose from the following causes:

Favourable: The intervention of America, the consequent accession of one small country after another until most of the world was against Germany, the expected accession of China, the active co-operation of Greece since the removal of Constantine and the return of Venizelos, and the use, therefore, of Greek railways and harbours, the weakening of Austria-Hungary and Turkey.

Unfavourable: Germany's whip behind Austria-Hungary together with Italy's insistence on Trieste, the war-weariness of France, the defection of Russia, Germany's menace below the sea and in the air.

As against the 15 per cent superiority of the Allies on all battle-fronts, the Germans had a hundred and fifty-six divisions on the Western Front and larger reserves. If they were fighting a losing game since the Marne, the German people did not know it and could not conceive it; there were minor spectacular successes in Russia, Servia, Roumania and elsewhere; an enormous national propaganda kept the people excited and determined.

On the whole the favourable seemed to outbalance the unfavourable, yet there were everywhere so many qualifi-

cations and cancellations—the most one dared certainly say was that the Allies stood better in July 1917 than in July 1916.

The advent to the Allied cause of America, for instance, was an enormous financial relief. Without it, Mr. Balfour had told the Americans, 'a calamity' would ensue—no further trade between England and America, no debts paid by the other Allies, the collapse of Europe, an end to everything. It was also a moral stimulus. But it was of no immediate significance on the battlefields, since not more than one hundred and twenty or thirty thousand American troops were expected in Europe by the end of July, who would only gradually come into the fighting, and meanwhile British ships had to be used to bring them over.

In Austria-Hungary there was a shortage of food and coal; the people, if not the soldiers, were war-weary; the new Emperor and his wife were war-weary; the chief of the Austria-Hungarian General Staff was in disagreement with Hindenburg; Scandinavian countries, it was rumoured, and also other neutral countries, had been approached to act as peace intermediaries; and Count Czernin had spoken publicly of a peace 'without annexations or indemnities'.

Some people said this was only a trap. But, on the other hand, Hindenburg had replied just as publicly in Vienna, that Germany could not accept a no-annexation peace since, unless she annexed Belgium, she herself would have to face disruption and bankruptcy. And there was the Reichstag reaffirmation that Germany fought only in defence of her freedom, independence and territorial possessions and would 'carry on the war resolutely and unanimously until the rights of Germany and her Allies are secured'.

Whether there was disagreement, however, or not, the relations between Austria-Hungary and Germany were such—Austria's need and fear of Germany such—that she dared not make peace against Germany's behest.

And if Austria was weary, so was France. The nation was weary, and the army. The French spring offensive had failed. The reserves were gone. Money was gone. The fighting—the devastation—was on French soil. After three years of sacrifice there seemed no end but the end of France with the countries that were already ended.

French statesmen were weary. French women, working their little farms and shops, without men or money, were weary. The first strong young men were gone, and the middle-aged men and the new boys in the line were weary. They were weary and resentful. It was a bitter sport to go through the villages making the baa-ing noise of sheep led to the slaughter. Russians drafted into the French army rose and had to be subdued at the point of the rifle. Commanders had to be changed and soldiers cajoled. Exactions were made, economies practised, that infuriated their British associates. There were even Frenchmen who spoke of a separate peace. Until, then, America could effectively help, the burden of the war rested on Britain. Although the British had reached their maximum strength for offensive purposes and there was opposition to withdrawing more men from essential industries, and strikes were being inspired in England by the example of Russia, Britain had now to take over part of the French line—seventy-five to eighty-five miles suggested the French, pointing out that, as against the six hundred and ninety-three thousand casualties of the British, their casualties were one million, nine hundred and fifty thousand.

It was clear that henceforth no French offensive could be depended on to draw the German reserves. Of these, it was computed, there were still one million, six hundred thousand at home, and the task of meeting them must fall chiefly on the British. Among the Allies who had entered the war together, the British alone were still at full strength.

The assistance of Greece was more than counterbalanced

by the defection of Russia. Russia was now making her last flicker before going out (Brusilov against the Austrians) but Russians were already fraternising with their enemies on the Eastern Front—more work for Britain on other fronts.

Finally, if Britain with her ships could resist raids and invasion, protect Allied and British trade and sea communications, hinder enemy trade and press enemy peoples—Germany with her submarines could undo British ships. Britain's responsibility on the sea was, indeed, so arduous that one of the reasons the adherence of Holland and the Scandinavian countries had not been sought from the beginning lay in the necessity it would have created of guarding more ships and coasts—though, for her own sake, England now protected the ports of Holland.

It seemed to Jellicoe and others of his way of thinking that if Germany were not driven from her submarine bases at Ostend and Zeebrugge, England might, indeed, find it almost impossible to maintain her communications with the army in France.

## 2

It was in these circumstances that Jellicoe and the army chiefs (Sir William Robertson and Sir Douglas Haig) put before the War Cabinet their plan for a great offensive which was to free Zeebrugge and Ostend and finally break the German navy. Minor offensives, they declared, had proved themselves to be useless: the Germans afterwards always renewed their strength. They demanded now a powerful attack—no gamble, no continuance without certain success, thousands of lives not to be needlessly sacrificed—but they demanded an offensive on a crushing scale in Flanders.

Mr. Lloyd George pleaded against a great offensive. Calculating the chances of success, and the rewards of success, he found they did not justify a great offensive. What, he

asked, had the results been of even the triumph at Vimy and Messines? 'Brilliant preliminary successes, followed by weeks of desperate and sanguinary struggle, leading to nothing except perhaps the driving of the enemy back a few barren miles—beyond that nothing to show except a ghastly casualty list. I earnestly entreat our military advisers as well as the Cabinet to think again before they finally commit the British army to an attack.'

The French could not even strongly assist. They had practically no reserves. By death, disease, mutilation and capture they had already lost two million men. Their leaders were against a great offensive: 'We cannot drag an unwilling army with doubting leaders and a disheartened nation into the most gigantic battle ever waged.'

It was now he urged the war chiefs to remember that 'the European battlefield was one and indivisible'—that victory might as easily come in Austria or Turkey as in France or Belgium. He thought that if Austria were heavily defeated she would make a separate peace. Only Trieste stood in the way, and if the Italians actually captured Trieste, the Austrians would yield that too.

'The Italians are now eight miles away from that city. We are promised that by a vigorous offensive we can drive the German Army with its well-equipped, well-led and homogeneous force a distance of twenty and thirty miles and capture Zeebrugge and Ostend. Surely, then, there ought to be a chance of driving the more demoralised, more heterogeneous, less well-supported Austrian Army a distance of eight miles? In the north we have practically no superiority of men in attacking the Germans. The Italians have a superiority of between fifty and a hundred per cent over the Germans. What they lack is guns and ammunition; these we can supply.'

Three months later (so much for the preponderating and



expectant Italians and Mr. Lloyd George's dream) seven German and nine Austrian divisions utterly routed the Italians at Caporetto, The Italians lost over half a million men, the whole Italian army fled towards the Piave, and the British and French had to come to their support.

Mr. Lloyd George suggests in his *War Memoirs* that Smuts is largely responsible for the War Cabinet's final agreement to the Flanders offensive. He himself, he says, and also Milner and Bonar Law were against it, Curzon supported it moderately. 'General Smuts was strongly of the view that the Generals had made out their case for at least having a good try. Personally he thought the chances highly favourable. . . . Lord Balfour was impressed by General Smuts' support of the plan and was also in favour of having a good try. Haig was fully in agreement that we ought not to push attacks that had not a reasonable chance of success, but that we ought to proceed step by step. He himself had no intention of entering into a tremendous offensive involving heavy losses. His plan was aggressive without committing us too far.'

Balancing, therefore, support within the Cabinet to opposition, Mr. Lloyd George left 'the responsibility for decision to Sir William Robertson and Sir Douglas Haig, on the understanding that if the progress they made with the operation did not realise the expectations they had formed, it should be called off and effective help be rendered to the Italians to press their offensive'.

## 3

Outside Smuts' library on his farm near Pretoria is a wooden verandah (he sleeps on another verandah) and an iron bed stands on it, and also a small table covered with worn brown oilcloth, and a big rough basket for waste paper. Sometimes he brings from his library a chair with a thonged

seat that his grandfather made a hundred years ago, and he writes at the table—hurried dutiful letters, or letters to people in England about politics or the League of Nations or the World State (in which he does not believe). He wears a khaki shirt open at the neck and khaki trousers. The dun clothes bleach his light skin and his clear light eyes. His face—brow widened, beard narrowed, cheekbones out—is more triangular than it used to be. His stranded hair is very white. He has the delicate hands that are characteristic—not of artists who, working with their hands, need useful bones and a good covering over the bones of sensitive flesh—but perhaps of dictators who live by their passions. Smuts is incompetent with his hands, and if he were not the servant of his conscience he might be a dictator. He looks trim, taut and restless. Among the fights going on within him his youth is fighting too. He says, 'I am coming to the end,' but he says also, 'I cannot stop.' He tells his youth, 'It is time to give up. Give up!' His youth will not.

The harsh South African spring is come, and that the earth should know it for spring at all is strange, but the trees he had planted twenty years ago are renewed in green, and he says: 'Life is good!' but he says again: 'Such is life!' He hardly knows he is speaking the little contradictory clichés: his mood is the mood of Ecclesiastes: 'He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.'

For Italy is at war with Abyssinia. The League, his passion, is being tested to breaking point. Against his creed, his belief in prevailing beneficence, there face him the things for which men must give their lives: the oppressions that are done under the sun and the song of fools; and he speaks of war.

He speaks of the Great War and the mud of Flanders.

As Smuts' sensual apprehension is not very strong, he does not get powerful impressions, and even less is he able to convey the impressions he does get. So he can describe how a people came by their blood, characteristics or beliefs, but not the face of a man. He can describe how the world was formed, but not how the peacemakers sat in the Hall of Mirrors. He can analyse a thought, but he cannot tell a story.

A certain shyness hinders him too. This shyness—the fear of making a spectacle of himself—prevented him from dancing in his youth, and it prevents him now from sharing any kind of emotion or even giving praise unless he doesn't mean it . . . except with incomplete or abstract human beings—children or an audience.

He hardly says how the great men of the war looked or behaved in talk with him, or at the War Cabinet, the battle-fronts, Rapallo and Versailles. He will mention: 'Fisher walked up and down while he spoke, and he spoke all the time about the North Sea.' . . . 'Henry Wilson dramatised himself, but Lloyd George wouldn't see it.' . . . 'I hear that when Curzon was dying, he said about his visitors: "Send those people away. They worry me, and they'll drink all my old brandy".' . . . But, for the rest, it is only: 'I found Curzon very plausible, but he hadn't a first-class intellect. Balfour was a great and subtle thinker, though not original. Asquith's mind was executive, not creative. Lloyd George is more than fascinating. He has genius. His mind is brilliant, energetic, resourceful and courageous without limit. The English party system killed him, but history will show him the biggest Englishman of them all.' He says such things about the men with whom he was associated. But they take no breath from his words—they remain names.

When, therefore, he sits on his verandah and stares at his

trees and thinks of the mud of Flanders, he does not describe how he went with Sir Maurice Hankey to see it, and how it looked with its shell craters of slimy water, and how men struggled and slept and sank and drowned and died of their wounds in the mud. He says—he feels—he thinks the whole time: It must not happen again. But when he speaks of Passchendaele he speaks in terms of policy and that is all.

‘I supported the Passchendaele campaign’, he says.

## 5

‘The charge Lloyd George makes against Haig’, Smuts says, ‘is that in May and June Haig had information from the French Commander-in-Chief and others which he did not disclose to the Cabinet. He bases this on Sir Henry Wilson’s diary, and on Wilson’s general impressions. For my part, I cannot think Haig was the man deliberately to withhold essential information, and Wilson, on the other hand, was a temperamental man whose views were coloured by his moods, and the statements in his diary are often misleading.’

‘Also the position of the autumn was not the position of the summer. . . .

‘There were two ideas behind the campaign which ended with Passchendaele. One had to do with Jellicoe. Jellicoe’s complaint was that, throughout the war, the navy had to defend too long a line of communications. The sole attack on these communications was by submarine, the sole defence by small craft, of which there were never enough. Jellicoe wanted to get rid of the submarine.

‘In those days anti-submarine mines were just becoming effective, and Jellicoe suggested therefore a barrier of mines across the North Sea to close the northern exit, and another barrier in the Straits of Dover. He expected these barriers

to show results by the middle of 1918. More urgently, he wanted a strong offensive in Flanders to get the Germans out of their submarine bases at Ostend.

'This was a view I had, up to a point, supported earlier in the year. I said then that if the French insisted on a defensive policy, as they were doing at the time, they would not require so many men, and our forces should accordingly be concentrated to the north, partly as a strategic reserve to be used in emergency, and partly for the purpose of recovering the north coast of Belgium.

'I don't think, however—I never did—that the naval objective in itself justified a campaign on the Flanders scale. . . .

'There was the second objective:

'Following the appointment of Nivelle in place of Joffre, and his initial success, the French had been completely smashed in the Compiègne and Nivelle thrown out; American reinforcements had not appeared in sufficient numbers to stiffen them; there was serious mutiny under Pétain; Paris itself was in danger. Sir Henry Wilson had warned us months ago that the French could do no more. He had turned out to be right: they could not. They had failed us in the summer campaign—had not carried out their undertakings concerning an offensive, had postponed promised attacks on which we relied. It was not their fault. They were the most gallant of people. Their endurance, as a people, living as they were, in the midst of war, had been heroic in the extreme. The circumstances were beyond them.

'The Germans, on the other hand, were strengthened by the forces released from the Russian campaign. Near as they came to winning the war in the spring of 1918—in the autumn of 1917, with the French so weak and the Americans so slow, they had an even better chance.

'There was, in short, a more urgent reason than the naval

demand for the Flanders offensive: nothing less than the saving of the war. It seemed likely that, if we did not draw the Germans away from the French, not only would Pétain fail to hold his line, but Paris might be taken and the war lost before ever the weight of the American army could be felt. There were only the British to prevent it. I think that, by pinning the Germans down in Flanders, they did prevent it. I still think my instinct and reasoning in the awful choice were right.

‘As it happened, the Channel ports were not freed by the offensive, and we lost four hundred thousand men. What there is to put against this terrible cost is that it probably saved the war.’

## 6

Here are the notes Smuts made in considering the war situation and the Flanders campaign: the facts given him by the war chiefs, their views, certain conclusions of his own. The notes are written on three half-sheets of paper, and there are no alterations except for the crossing-out of two words: ‘humiliating’ and ‘backing’.

21.6.17

*War Policy: How to hold on through 1917 and prepare for victory in 1918?*

Wilson on *French morale*: Some striking success necessary (military and diplomatic). Doubt whether *Bulgaria or Austria* could be detached at present, and there is danger of serious friction with Italy. (Russian paralysis is key. This applies also to Turkey.)

Where military success?

*Mesopotamia*: We shd go on defensive.

*Palestine*: Offensive-defensive with additional heavy artillery and troops (7 divisions). .



2.1.6.17

entry = notebook on Rough 1917 and preparation in 1918

• Wilson & Nash morale: some striking mean, narrow, stability & difference

Griffin & others. Polypus or rusting will be detected & treated.

in the same way as the other with the  
 only one? } Anna, perhaps  
 is the  
 opposite to the

What might mean?

Kuopstemia : we sh<sup>d</sup> p<sub>o</sub>n. lifa<sup>o</sup>re

Pacifist : offensive-defensive with additional heavy artillery & tanks (7 divisions)

*Salvia* in *Spina*, with without *Curie*

with bowel involvement without jaundice

Montrant à Paris l'égypte

keeping Lewis going means life & death in Britain

Pressure on Turkey by maintaining large force  
in East.

Wesleyan Univ. Palestine & Arab. Time

Carbon foot remains

Plants. (1) Linch questions.

Am mighty hand of  
great hand

Prayer to improve His things  
and protect Our King

Anteriorly offering direct in  
right direction i.e. 2nd cost

the air can reach  
and air is on farms  
the more with

Army and Air is on par  
his name with the

NOTE BY J. C. SMUT



initial value from the 'Barbican' Project may, perhaps,  
be called off at this stage if the Government

(2) Large Section leaves. Road & Leamington, and  
North coast. 1st day.

(3) Structures and leave as proposed  
and reach office.

(4) Mrs. Lewis to Mr. Major. Mrs.  
line

(5) Misses are sent to Holland a  
with American reserve my 2  
year secure sleep - over  
Holland. 2nd day.

Company for 1917 will reach office in time to  
leave at 100,000 per month - but then by within 1 hour  
an increase.

General may not wait for 1918 but make peace and

War-weapons may affect on the

my series thing to be operations in which military  
authorities are agreed.

Public led to expect better, & in fact will be very different.



FLANDERS: AUTUMN, 1917

*Salonika*: No offensive possible without Russia. Withdrawal impossible without grave dangers.

*Commitments*—Servia and Venizelos keeping Servia means big *hold on Russia*.

*Pressure on Turkey* by maintaining huge force in East.

*Help from here for Palestine* at proper time.

*Western Front* remains

Flanders. (1) Limited objective.

From military point of view quite sound.

Necessary to improve Ypres defences and protect Dunkirk.

Considerable offensive directed in right direction, i.e. north coast where only communications port and air in our favour.

both

Army and Air move north.

*Moral value*/on French and Russia very great.

*Could be called off* at this stage if too expensive.

(2) *Larger objective* (1) Secures Ostend and Zeebrugge, and north coast and Navy saved.

(2) Extricates us and [?] properly in case of French collapse.

(3) Forces Germany to Antwerp-Brussels-Namur line.

(4) Brings us next to Holland and with American reserve army next year secures Liège and evacuation of Belgium. If Holland joins campaign for 1918 will reach Rhine in this way.

*Losses* at 100,000 per month = less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  million whom we can make good.

Germans may not wait for 1918 but make peace activities. War weariness may affect us too.

Very serious thing to veto operations on which military authorities are agreed.

Public led to expect success, and inactivity will be very serious disillusion.

25.6.17.

(1) Only first-class army still in field is ours. German morale probably no better than French. Impotent for offensive.

(2) Time has therefore come to use this army. Not wastefully or desperately. Results may be far reaching.

(3) If not now used opportunity might never occur, and our army might be in the same humiliating position as navy.

(4) Question what front. That decided by our disposition and impossibility of change: W. Front.

(5) Belgian Coast best plan and chance yet [?] for many reasons.

*Italian front* may mean backing staking our all on wrong horse: wild gamble.

It will be seen how, after three months in England, Smuts was still so fresh and optimistic as to believe any success possible. Yet the disparity between his hopes and the results is not the most terrible thing in these notes. The most terrible is this calculation:

'Losses at 100,000 per month = less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  million whom we can make good.'

7

A man had to calculate it whose dream has always been the rights of the individual—peace and liberty.

What cost in lives would Smuts have called 'too expensive'? At what stage might the campaign 'be called off'?

Smuts' idea, failing a successful campaign in Flanders, was a campaign in Turkey. This he preferred to Mr. Lloyd George's dream of attacking Austria through Italy. For however desirable, he said, it might be to detach Austria from Germany (this detachment to be followed by the sur-

render of Turkey and Bulgaria, and the release of forces locked up in Mesopotamia, Egypt and Salonika), however prepared to risk the displeasure of Germany, there was little chance of making a separate peace with Austria while Italy persisted in her claim on Austrian territory, and there was little chance of Italy's abating that claim.

There were some (as, for instance, Robertson) who said that since Italy had not done as much as the Allies had a right to expect, promises to Italy should be reconsidered and an opening given to Austria to come to terms. Smuts did not support this. If he was temporarily lured to costly (though, as he holds, imperative) agreement with Haig and Robertson concerning a campaign in Flanders, fundamentally he shared Mr. Lloyd George's belief that all fronts were one front, and Germany might be beaten elsewhere than in the north of France—in the East as well as the West, better at her weakest than her strongest.

If Turkey were eliminated (he said) the Dardanelles could be opened, Russia drawn back, and Bulgaria manœuvred out of the war altogether. He believed there was the most to hope and the least to fear from Turkey.

For what had Turkey to gain from Germany? And she was already the heaviest loser in the war. She could have little heart or motive in further struggling.

He proposed, therefore, that a diplomatic offensive might be made to detach Turkey from Germany. If that failed there remained three possible points of physical attack: by way of the Dardanelles; by cutting the Sofia-Constantinople railway; by an attack launched from Alexandretta.

The 1915 Dardanelles campaign had been, he said, strategically sound, but mismanaged both as to the original naval attack and the later military attack.

The Sofia-Constantinople plan meant a combined offensive from the north and south. So, unless Russia was there

to help, the Balkans could only be held defensively. There remained Alexandretta.

In spite of the fact that general staff and navy had unanimously rejected Kitchener's suggestion of an offensive from Alexandretta in 1915—easier then than now because of the gaps in the Turkish railway communications—Smuts still felt the Alexandretta plan to be—as it always had been—the best plan, since the railways to the Hedjaz, Palestine and Baghdad were only fifteen miles from Alexandretta port, and if from that base the railways were taken, there would be an end of Turkey.

He set aside the original French idea that an expedition from Alexandretta would need too large a force. All this was changed now by the Greeks coming into the war. The troops, lying uselessly at Salonika, could be in part released from Alexandretta. There was no need to send forces from other theatres. Enough could be found in the East—from the Salonika, Palestine and Mesopotamia fronts—for a surprise attack on Alexandretta and the railway line near it.

## Chapter VII

### THE EMPIRE'S HANDYMAN

#### I

From most of the deliberations that arose as soon as Smuts entered the War Cabinet particular work flowed for Smuts.

It fell to him to go on a peace mission to Austria, and, during the Armistice, to Hungary.

He was offered an expedition to Russia: 'Are you ready to take on the Russian enterprise?' Mr. Lloyd George scrawled in pencil on a half-sheet of paper. But nothing came of that because, after considering it, Smuts doubted whether anything could still be done with Russia; and when, after the war—and the peace—he was preparing to sail for South Africa, he publicly advised against Britain's intervention there.

Then in 1917 he worked out the Alexandretta campaign against the Turks, and in 1918 he helped to plan the northward advance, which later took place, through Palestine.

He was a member of the Middle East Committee under Curzon that looked after the campaigns in Turkish lands. He was a member of the Northern Neutral Committee under Carson that watched Allied war interests in North Western Europe. In the later period of the war he was responsible for measures designed to safeguard Holland in the event of sudden attack by Germany. He helped to settle labour disputes and strikes—notably a strike of policemen and a dangerous coal strike in Wales; and was, in general, what they came to call the Cabinet's handyman.

## THE EMPIRE'S HANDYMAN

He had his own particular activities: the War Priorities Committee and the new Royal Air Force and the air defences of London that he founded and directed. . . .

### 2

The War Priorities Committee arose in this way: Smuts had not been long in England when, working as he was in so many departments, it began to seem to him that a necessary mechanism was lacking. All sorts of things were wanted at once and increasingly: more ships, more aeroplanes, more guns, more explosives, more munitions, more tanks, more sea mines. Wherever one looked there were demands that could not be met by men and material; and the different departments were scrambling against one another for their pressing needs; and there were disputes and angers that, as Smuts says, made a war additional to the war on the foreign fronts.

Often departments won, he says, not on their merits, but on their prestige—or because they were managed by more able or persistent scramblers. There was enormous waste. There was a detriment, in all this friction, waste and bad distribution, to the conduct of the war.

He proposed the creation of a War Priorities Committee—a body to settle priorities between the various departments: decide which were the most immediate needs, how industrial energy should be concentrated. On this committee there should sit, he suggested, the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Secretary of State for War, the Minister of Munitions, the Secretary of State for Air and the Minister of National Service. A member of the War Cabinet might preside.

The committee came into being, Smuts was asked to be its chairman, and he remained its chairman until the end of the war. Now he mediated between the competing com-



## THE EMPIRE'S HANDYMAN

partments, and his committee filled the gap caused by the dispersion, according to the English system, of war functions over many departments, and it created an effect, on the industrial side, of a unified War Ministry. The arrangement worked with smoothness and rapidity, and if there is ever again a great war a War Priorities Committee will, he says, have to be among the earliest re-creations.

### 3

In regard to the air forces, this was how Smuts came to be connected with them. When the war began it had been an affair dangerous and spectacular for English airmen to cross the Channel to France in aeroplanes whose speed was seventy-five miles an hour, and whose endurance was four and a half hours. Air armaments were automatic pistols and Mills hand grenades. Seaplanes, as likely as not, refused to rise and had to be towed in. Actual flying was done by youths who failed to convey their enthusiasm to older men. Manufacturers, and not the government, made the experiments and innovations.

By the time Smuts was concerned with England's air organisation the speed of new machines was a hundred and twenty-five miles an hour, they had wireless, their armaments were Lewis guns with unlimited ammunition, seaplanes could be relied on to rise and play their part in defending the coasts of England, Holland and France.

Yet one thing remained constant: the older services, however they might act independently in other respects, agreed in resisting the claims of the newcomer. 'Say what you like,' Milner wrote to Smuts, 'the soldiers and sailors at War Office and Admiralty do not yet grasp the fact that there is a new kind of warfare before us and that, besides the help they have to give the army and navy, the airmen will have to fight battles of their own.'

## THE EMPIRE'S HANDYMAN

'If you were Air Minister with an Air Council of your selection under you, I should feel easy in my mind on this point. But I recognise the difficulty of this and I see that it may be an even better arrangement to have you in the Cabinet with a special obligation to keep, as Minister, the supervision of Air Departments.'

Few of the army and navy chiefs supported Fisher's demand in the paper sent to Smuts a few months ago: 'An immense cloud of aircraft is *imperative*. (There ought NOW to have been *thousands!!!*)' Fisher's own protégé, Jellicoe, complained that airships ought not to be built at the navy's expense when the programme of warships was in arrear, convoys short and losses needing replacement. It was, as it happens, the man whose disagreement with Fisher at the Admiralty had hastened the political reorganisation of England—it was Mr. Winston Churchill who most vehemently supported Fisher's demand for a great airship programme.

The departmental rancour, in fact, that had caused Smuts to create the War Priorities Committee was intensified when it came to the question of the air service and the older services—just because the other services were older services, and regarded the new young service as merely an appendage to themselves.

When Smuts began to interest himself in these departmental troubles the position was that the navy and army had their own separate air services, and competed with one another for personnel and material. To secure co-operation and co-ordination between the two air services there were appointed from time to time joint boards. Lord Derby, and later Curzon, tried to keep the peace and failed. The navy and the army had different points of view, different methods, different requirements and they could not collaborate—it was fundamentally impossible.

In the summer of 1917 an Air Board existed under Lord

Cowdray, but it had not the powers to maintain an air staff, or to work out common plans of strategy for an air force as a whole: the final word was always with the two senior services. And, meanwhile, two new problems had emerged. Home defence against air attacks from abroad was neither a purely naval nor a purely military matter. These attacks were now becoming frequent and they called for a common air policy for home defence. Then, again, the shortage in aircraft had been overtaken and the Ministry of Munitions was supplying more aeroplanes than the army and navy separately needed. It was therefore now possible to use the air arm by itself for large-scale operations behind the military lines, against the inland bases and munition centres of the enemy. And this called for a unified air force, with its own general staff, its own independent command, and a strategy distinct from that of the navy and army. The change was precipitated by the great air raids on London.

For this July, the very month in which the War Cabinet was considering the whole war situation, a climax of anguish and resolution had been reached through the killing of a number of children in the East End of London. Now it was no longer a matter of night attacks by Zeppelins, but of raids by squadrons of aeroplanes. A few months later an air raid took place while Smuts himself was lecturing to the Royal Geographical Society about German East Africa, and the president suggested that a move might be made to the basement. 'No, we'll stay here,' said Smuts, and went on. . . . London, it was clear, had now to be considered part of the European battle-front.

It was in these circumstances the decision was made that the Prime Minister and Smuts, in consultation with such experts as they needed, the Field Marshal commanding the Home forces, and representatives from the Admiralty and General Staff, should examine the question of defence

against air raids, air organisation generally, and the direction of aerial operations.

The Prime Minister left the matter in the hands of Smuts.

## 4

Smuts had written some time before that as the enemy was stronger in the air than he had been, and Britain, relatively, not so strong, superiority in the air had to be maintained 'by an increase of aircraft not merely for the sake of defence, but to assist in an offensive bombing policy against the industrial and munition centres of Germany'. He was alarmed, he said, at the backwardness of all preparations concerning the air and air offensive.

When, however—shortly after the air raid on London that had killed the children—when, the people wild and clamouring, the bombing of German towns came to be considered, it seemed that, since Germans were in a better position to attack English towns than English to attack German towns, reprisals might prove more dangerous for England than for Germany. And so what Smuts said now was that, since there were no islands in the air, since of all countries England risked most through the advance of aviation, since London was henceforth in the battle arena, 'we can only defend this island effectively against air attacks by offensive measures, by attacking the enemy in his air bases on the Continent and in that way destroying his power of attacking us across the Channel'. He did not mention industrial centres, and in balancing the conflicting views represented by Mr. Churchill and Jellicoe he followed that principle of his which is well known to South Africans but hardly at all to Britons. Smuts is subtle to the point of mystery, but it really seems as if in England, in those war years, they saw him as a simple Boer from whom inspiration flowed without conscious thought. 'He is a type alto-

gether un-English—innocent of English double vision and compromise.'

He had said to Kitchener, when it was a question of peace between Boers and Britons: 'As history teaches us, it has happened before that questions were solved by compromises.' This peace, achieved by compromise, had brought him here, to fight for England. He now pacified Kitchener's own associates by saying that he saw no necessity for any rigid plan incapable of changing as the situation itself changes; and the committee over which he presided declared finally that, although a reduced airship programme was essential, this reduced programme should have priority over the shipbuilding programme, and it also justified a reduction in the output of munitions.

Smuts ended in dealing not only with the air defences of London but also with the unification (on which he had reported in July) of the entire air service. And what he suggested was that, as the Air Board had found itself hitherto in the position merely of a supply department with no authority in matters of policy, an Air Ministry ought to be established, and until it functioned a small committee might be set up to direct air policy. His suggestion was approved, and the interim committee consisted of Smuts in the chair, with the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary of State for War.

At the same time an Air Organisation Committee of experts, presided over by Smuts, was appointed to work out the details, regulations and so on of the new unified force which came to be called the Royal Air Force. This committee began its sittings in August and completed its work in October. It drafted the Bill for the new Air Ministry, and next month, without opposition, Parliament passed it.

There is something delightful to Smuts in rapid work. Slowness racks him. He likes to remember that, with all the

other things he was doing at the same time, he accomplished in three months a task that had been thought impossible of fulfilment during the war—and without dislocation of the other services and with the general consent of the war departments.

The position of First Air Minister was eventually offered to Lord Northcliffe. He refused it because it would interfere with his press activities, so it was taken by his brother, Lord Rothermere.

When the report reached South Africa that Smuts was presiding over the Air Raids Committee, when English papers came out to South Africa that pressed for Smuts' appointment to 'sole command of the United Air Services. Give him control. Let him have, without question, without delay, the things he asks for—supplies, men, money—and it will be the greatest day's work that any Prime Minister will ever have performed'; they said simply in South Africa that the people were mad over there in England. 'We will await', commented a paper (English this time), 'with palpitating expectancy a cessation of the air raids over England.'

Mr. Lloyd George describes, in his *War Memoirs*, how the flying services were unified by Smuts, and the air defences of London investigated and reorganised; how planes were combined into units and trained for fighting in flight formation; and how, under Smuts, the air defences of London were rapidly transformed in strength and effectiveness so that daylight raids became impossible and night raids difficult and costly. 'All through the winter of 1917-1918,' writes Mr. H. G. Wells in his *Outline of History*, 'London on every moonlight night became familiar with the banging of warning maroons, the shrill whistles of the police alarm, the hasty clearance of the streets, the distant rumblings of scores of hundreds of anti-aircraft-guns growing steadily to

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a wild uproar of thuds and crashes, the swish of flying shrapnel and at last, if any of the raiders got through the barrage, with the dull, heavy bang of the hurtling bombs. Then presently amidst the diminuendo of the gunfire, would come the inimitable rushing sound of the fire brigade engines and the hurry of ambulances. . . .’

The air raids over London gradually ceased and were diverted to Paris. To-day of all the institutions created in England during the Great War only two remain: The Secretariat to the War Cabinet, founded by Mr. Lloyd George, of Sir Maurice Hankey, and the organisation that Smuts himself established.

## Chapter VIII

### SMUTS ON THE LEAGUE

#### I

Smuts avoids social intercourse. In South Africa the gatherings at which he is seen are official not social. He maintains human relationships with a sort of dutiful sentimentality; he observes even conscientiously a personal obligation; he will not neglect to visit a sick person, to maintain an old correspondence or answer an essential letter; an old associate will have a persistent claim on his attention. But his passions are for causes rather than people.

In the twenty-nine months he spent overseas during the Great War, away from his home, he found himself comfortable in the households of one or two inconspicuous families, but otherwise he went nowhere and met no one except on matters connected with the war. Sometimes people wanted advice or help. Sometimes fathers asked him what to do about their sons, or mothers about their daughters, or women about themselves. He was no more than forty-seven, and uniquely distinguished. . . . He was 'free as an angel' and 'a simple Boer from the veld'. An alluring combination. Surely such a man must be more accessible than an Englishman clamped in his social place. He seemed more accessible. . . . It takes a lifetime in South Africa to know Smuts' fundamental inaccessibility. Men who have been his followers for twenty years appreciate it better than those who meet him for the first time. 'You look into those



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pale eyes of his. "My dear fellow!" he says cordially. But what is in his mind? What do you matter to him? Does he even hear you? . . .'

Smuts says simply of his life in London, 'I had no time for anything but work. There was no end to the work they wanted me to do. I have never worked so hard in my life. My hair became white. My brother, at sixty, has hardly a white hair. My brother is a happy man. My hair was nearly white at fifty.'

But then, under everything, through everything, all the time he was attending meetings at the War Cabinet, flying to this or that part of the war front, making reports on the army, the navy, the air, the diplomatic and war position in Europe, Asia, Africa and America—while he was settling strikes, presiding over committees, deciding anything from how much linseed oil a linoleum factory should be allowed to whether acroplanes should be built rather than airships—while he was also going through the country to hearten the people with his speeches—a passion, the greatest, most poignant, most persistent of his life, was growing in him. Smuts had barely arrived in England when he was overwhelmed by the ideal of a League of Nations.

### 2

Smuts' conceptions of a British Commonwealth and a League of Nations are united. The day after he made his first League speech he made his great Commonwealth speech. 'Talk about a League of Nations,' he said then; 'you are the only league of nations that has ever existed.' He says again: 'The most noble expression of the idea of the League of Nations was given almost three thousand years ago . . . the prophet Isaiah did not mention the League of Nations, nor did he see Geneva. But perhaps Geneva is only the halfway house to Jerusalem.' Smuts means, he says, these words:

‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

‘And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

‘And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.’

Outside the exhortation of biblical prophets, the first attempt to formulate a law of nations came from a Hollander. In 1625 there was published in Paris the *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* of Hugo Grotius, not only the father of International Law, but a leading authority on Roman Dutch Law as it is still practised in South Africa.

After Grotius there was hardly ever a great war not followed by a plan, unfortunately less great, to make wars cease for ever. There were peace plans after the wars of Napoleon. Alexander the First sponsored the Holy Alliance. In 1818, at the Declaration of Aix-la-Chapelle, five nations bound themselves to ‘principles which in their application to a permanent state of peace can alone effectively guarantee the independence of each government and the stability of the General Association’. Castlereagh instituted conferences of ambassadors. The new system crystallised into an arrangement called the European Concert. The Hague Court of Arbitration was established in 1899, just in time for the Boer War. Mr. E. M. Forster thinks the term League of

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Nations originated with Lowes Dickinson who, in the first fortnight of the Great War, discussed the idea of such leagues. 'I have always', Balfour told the Imperial Conference in 1911 (but with doubts of its future), 'been a League of Nations man, even before the League came into existence.' In January 1915, at the Century Club in New York, an American League to Enforce Peace was established. Soon after, Lord Shaw of Dunfermline became president of a League of Nations Society in England. From May 1916 onwards, President Wilson in his most important addresses on foreign policy declared himself the champion of 'a concert of nations' (as he sometimes called it), or 'a concert of power', or 'a covenant of co-operative peace', or 'a general association of nations'. The French spoke, in 1917, of a *Société des Nations*. In that year too Mr. H. G. Wells came in, adding the word 'free' to the previous titles—'free' because there had to be republics, he thought, in England as well as in Russia and Germany; and an end 'not only to this new German Imperialism' but also to British Imperialism and French Imperialism. . . . and those creations of the futurist imagination, the imperialism of Italy and Greece. . . .

It was on May 14th, 1917, that Smuts made his first League speech in England and became, with Wilson, its leading exponent. He has never had the opportunity to attend a League Assembly, he has never seen how the League works, but probably no day has passed on which the thought of it has not vitally, in an ecstasy of hope or despair, possessed his mind. 'All else I have done in my lifetime is as nothing and as dust and ashes compared with the small effort I have been able to contribute towards the building up of this new organisation for the future government of the world. . . .'

The occasion was a meeting held by the League of Nation's Society and presided over by Lord Bryce. It fell to Smuts to move the resolution 'That it is expedient in the interests of mankind that some machinery should be set up after the present war for the purpose of maintaining international rights and general peace; and this meeting welcomes the suggestions put forward for this purpose by the President of the United States and other influential statesmen in America, and commends to the sympathetic consideration of the British peoples the idea of forming a union of free nations for the preservation of permanent peace.'

All the things Smuts said that summer afternoon in England are said now by other people. But he said them then, at once, together, and from the depths of war.

He spoke of the desire the war had 'stamped into the hearts of millions of men and women for a better order of things. You see', he said, 'the result in a meeting like this, where you have gathered not only the dreamers and the idealists—the visionaries, who are the salt of the earth, but also practical men, and even men of blood like myself'—he chose ironically to class himself, who had been a visionary all his life, with the men of blood.

'This horror that has come over Christendom,' he said, 'this spirit of self-destruction which has overtaken our so-called civilisation—after all the fair promises, all the fair hopes, all the fine enthusiasm of the nineteenth century, this is what we have come to. It is computed that nearly eight million people have already been killed in this war—not the old and decrepit, not the unfit, but the best, the very best, those who should have been the natural creators of the new world; they lie buried on the battlefields of civilisa-

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tion, while large numbers have been marred and rendered unfit for the rest of their lives. It is probable the number of killed and wounded in this war is not far short of that of the total white population of the British Empire. . . .

'You see', he said, 'the most criminal disregard of all laws human and divine. You see civilisation itself crumbling almost to pieces. If some means are not provided by which such calamities may be prevented in the future, and wars like this are still possible in the future, then the whole fabric of our civilisation will be in danger, people will become filled with an unusual despair, and you will find the nations of the world saying: "From the world's bitter wind seek shelter in the grave." For what will be the use of life, or what will be the use of civilisation, if these are the points of all our efforts and all our endeavours?

"The scale of the disaster is so vast that the whole matter seems uncontrollable. Our nineteenth century science taught us how to mobilise the forces of nature, but it did not strengthen our social conscience correspondingly, and the result is that all these forces have been collected into a horrible engine of destruction which moves, like the accursed thing it is, like some blind destiny treading over our civilisation.

"If we had the moral ideas of the ancient Greeks we should believe this to be a black destiny—a supernatural power driving mankind on to despair. But we know better. We know that this war is not the work of some supernatural agency; this war is man-made. It is human forces that lie at the basis of it: human intelligence, human stupidity, human greed and ambition—they are all at the basis of this calamity that has overtaken us. . . . And what the human intelligence has done the human intelligence can undo. If one hundredth part of the consideration and the thought that have been given to the war is given to schemes of peace, then you will never see war again.

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‘But you must begin’, he quoted Lord Bryce, ‘with the hearts of men. . . .’

### 4

He says to-day—he points to the overwhelming vote for peace called forth by Lord Cecil’s plebiscite of 1934—that the hearts of men *have* changed.

He points at the same time to the irony: instead of liberators, tyrants; instead of a new world coming in, as Canning said, to redress the balance of the old, America going back to the anachronism of an idea that she is not part of the world, that she can save herself though the world goes down. . . .

When Smuts spoke in May of 1917 he saw the difficulties there might be before the League, but who could suppose that America, its very heart, would desert it?

‘It may seem’, he said, ‘as if the end of this war will be about the most hopeless time imaginable to talk of schemes of lasting peace. For at the end of this war you will find the world divided into two hostile camps, with a chasm of hatred between them such as probably has never been seen in the world before. . . . And when you come to think of creating machinery for lasting peace you will have to bear in mind that the time, in a certain sense, will be the most unpropitious possible for the effort you are trying to make.’ Yet deeper, he thought, than the hatred generated by the war would be ‘the creation of a better feeling in the hearts of men—the passion which has been burnt into millions of minds and hearts that this state of affairs should never be tolerated again’; and deeper than the will to peace, he added, the feeling that reformation must begin at the root. ‘In recent years we have had enough talk of peace and all the paraphernalia of peace. While we were at those conferences, while we were plastering the world with peace treaties, all

the time the real danger was growing; all the time the war spirit was rising; all the time there was this arming in the dark, and this scheming which has at last broken out in this great conflict over the world. The war has shown us that there is the very greatest danger in believing in paper and in institutions. What we want to see brought about is not merely agreements between nations. We must have this change,' he insisted, 'this change in the hearts of men.'

He called that the most important condition of future peace.

## 5

'The second condition', he said, 'is that at the end of this war we must conclude a good peace. I do not see how you are going to have a perpetual peace in future if this war is going to be ended like so many other wars, as a mere patch-work compromise between various conflicting interests. The war has carried us to the depths, let us build from the depths. It is only when we have, as the result of this war and of the peace treaty which will follow it, the establishment of the principle that nations will decide their own fate, that there will be the free consent of nations about their own destiny and their own disposal—it is only then that it will be possible to talk about the maintenance of peace in the future. . . . One of the most important conditions of future peace will be a peace treaty which will be a satisfactory conclusion of this war, a conclusion which will establish that nations will no longer, as in former years, be disposed of by alien statesmen and governments; that they will not be parcelled and chopped up so as to be divided among the big powers of the world; that they shall have the choice to decide their own fate. On that basis alone—on that basis of the national—will you be able to build the system of the supernational, the international. . . .'

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He came to the purpose of this meeting—he called it the third condition. ‘In some form or other we must bring about a league or union of nations with some common agreement of consultation on all vital issues.’ What that form would be he could not now say. The schemes he had so far heard of seemed to him confused, impractical and incapable of achievement—inflexible, not sufficiently adapted to meet the new complex changing conditions. An Anglo-American committee might be appointed, he thought, to consider old circumstances and new plans.

He thought also, but he did not say, that he himself would devise a plan for a League of Nations. . . .

### 6

He proceeded to a condition which Lord Bryce had called the essence of the scheme before them: behind any arrangement for future peace there had to be (or it stopped merely at visionary talk) some sanction, some force. ‘A nation which has got off the rails, or intends to get off the rails, must know that in the last resort the League of Nations is going to use force against her and is going to force her on the right rails if she is not going willingly to come back. It is not sufficient for a conference to meet from time to time like an Areopagus to discuss questions, but there must be a union which has force behind it and which is bound to use that force when the occasion arises. . . .

‘There remains’, he added, ‘a question not touched upon in our programme, which I also consider of the most vital importance, and that is the question of disarmament. . . . It is no use trying to prevent war when nations are armed to the teeth. If governments are allowed with impunity to prepare for war over a long process of years, to consolidate all their resources on a military basis with a view to making an



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attack such as we have seen in the present war, then inevitably you reach a point when not even a League of Nations is sufficiently strong to withstand the deluge. . . .

'Further, you want not only a court of law, you want not only a police force, but you want a periodic conference or other institution which will be able to change the situation in civilisation from time to time. The great weakness of the Holy Alliance that followed the Napoleonic Wars was just this, that it was simply a court to maintain the *status quo*—to ensure that no change took place and that things were maintained in that blissful state in which they were left by the Battle of Waterloo.

'Below the conservative crust of the Holy Alliance there were seething all the great forces which broke forth in the nineteenth century. The position will be far worse after this war than after Waterloo. You do not therefore want a body that will merely pass judgment and see that it is carried out, but one which will meet from time to time and revise the situation and liberate those forces of progress which must have an outlet unless there is to be another convulsion. . . .

'This war', he said in coming to his end, 'has not been fought, at any rate as far as we are concerned, for the purpose of gain or material interests. Millions of men have given their lives in this war, millions more are prepared to give their lives in this war, in order to achieve a good peace and to ensure it for the future. I think it would be the proper course that the peace treaty which is concluded after this war shall contain, as an integral part of it, the fundamental provisions, not in detail, but in principle, which will safeguard the future peace of the world. If that is done, then this war will not have been fought in vain. If that is done, then out of the horrors and sorrows of this, probably the greatest tragedy of the world, will have been born a great hope for the future of the world, and in that way this

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peace treaty which will conclude the war will become a real Magna Charta for the whole of humanity hereafter. . . .’

### 7

The words here quoted are about a half of those spoken by Smuts in this, his first, League speech. Could words be wiser? In the light of what has happened since, could they be more ironic?

‘This meeting welcomes the suggestions put forward . . . by the President of the United States and other influential statesmen in America.’

‘We must conclude a good peace.’

‘A nation which has got off the rails, or intends to go off the rails, must know that in the last resort the League of Nations is going to use force against her.’

‘It is no use trying to prevent war when nations are armed to the teeth.’

‘You want a body that will liberate those forces of progress which must have an outlet unless there is to be another convulsion.’

‘The peace treaty which will conclude this war will become a real Magna Charta for the whole of humanity hereafter.’

‘The good work the war has done—the creation of a better feeling in the hearts of men. . . .’

### 8

Smuts’ enemies say it is Smuts’ great defect that he does not understand men. He has a greater defect. He believes in them.

## Chapter IX

### SMUTS ON THE WAR

#### I

**T**he things that have gone wrong for Smuts have gone wrong because he believed in men.

The feeling in South Africa is that Smuts believes in men, not as the image of himself, but as the image of God—that this is the real trouble—that if he could come near to them as a human being and at the same time not expect so much of them, his dreams might have a better chance of fulfilment.

The real trouble, Smuts himself says (in the moments of despair which come to him), is that big ideas cannot succeed because little ideas won't let them. 'What is it that has ruined the League from the beginning—yes, and ruined the world too? The selfishness of parties—the selfishness of little people. The party system in America beat Wilson and it beat the League, it has beaten Lloyd George in England, and it fights all hopes in South Africa. I thought we had come through in South Africa. But we have not come through—not yet. The Imperialists don't see that the British Empire is gone and a nobler thing has taken its place: not a country with dependencies, but a brotherhood of peoples. The Republicans want to go back—can you believe it?—to the days of Kruger. And what do they all really want? Their own little selfish ends. As it happened in the Old Testament, so it happens to-day. Look at those Jewish

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statesmen in the Bible. Look at Isaiah and the other prophets. Think of their enormous vision. What became of their vision? The small fry always beat them.

'South Africa does not matter so much to the world at large, though it matters to Britain, both for itself and as the route to the East. But America matters to the world—it matters to the world that any great idea is beaten in America. We could do without the dictator nations in the world—we could say goodbye to Germany and Japan and Italy—if America were in the League. But the small fry in America have denied us. And how have they profited? May they congratulate themselves! Small fry and dictators—the Imperialism we fought the war to end—false, an anachronism—their work is to undo that poor little machine the League of Nations, and the world and themselves with it. Another civilisation may arise, who knows? Whether we understand its laws or not, the universe goes on. Ignoring all sense and law, humanity may go on too. But not our world. We all sink together.'

### 2

He speaks in these days as he has not spoken since the dream first came to him of a League of Nations. Could a reasonable man believe that, after the lesson of the war, humanity would not wish to save itself? He never blamed the German people as a whole. In the blackest days of the war, it seemed to him that German Imperialism had only to be put down and a new beginning could be made for the Germans no less than anyone else. 'Who was to foresee', he says to-day, 'that after struggling so manfully in defeat that they had the world's whole sympathy, after improving their economic position, they would suddenly go mad and throw it all away, ruin and break themselves, become more friendless than in the Great War, to make a god of Hitler? I looked

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on the Germans as the most cultivated race in the world. The French hated me for my belief in them. I see now that Prussianism underlay all their learning and sentimentality. They've thrown over Goethe and Schiller for Nietzsche.'

In his rectorial address to St. Andrews University (1934) he spoke of the new tyranny disguised in attractive patriotic colours, enticing youth . . . of 'men and women suffering until they abdicate their rights as individuals. . . .' In the war, while he took it to be his immediate business to put down German Imperialism, he said steadily: 'This war is not directed by the States against the German people. Military imperialism is the foe the Allies fight'—though whether the effect on the German people themselves was any different is not so clear. The German boys of seventeen, no less than the French boys, wept in their dugouts in the nights.

They say some of the most effective recruiting speeches made in the war were made by Smuts, and their publication was forbidden in Germany.

### 3

He went about England and Scotland and Wales making these speeches and receiving the freedom of large cities, the honorary degrees of their universities and the distinctions of their great corporations. He is a freeman of London, Bristol, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle upon Tyne, Sheffield, Cardiff, Glasgow, York and Dundee, and also of several livery companies. He has honorary degrees from twenty-three universities in England, Scotland, Ireland, the United States, Canada and South Africa. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was Rector of St. Andrews for the period 1931-1934. He is a bencher of the Middle Temple. He has been President of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science and President also of the Cen-

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tenary Meeting of the British Association that met in London and York. He has the Great Seal of the State of Massachusetts. Pretoria gave him a sword of honour, and he has a South African distinction too, widely awarded, which takes precedence over the D.S.O. He is a Privy Councillor and a Companion of Honour.

### 4

Here is the sort of thing Smuts used to say in the war:

'Germany still believes that . . . a military machine is sufficient to govern the world. She has not yet realised that ultimately all victories are moral, and that even the political government of the world is a moral government. The fundamental issue in this struggle in which we are engaged to-day is that the government of the world is not military, and it cannot be ruled by a military machine, but by the principles of equity, justice, fairness and equality' (3.4.17).

'The cause I fought for fifteen years ago is the cause I am fighting for to-day. I fought for liberty and freedom then, and I am fighting for them to-day' (11.4.17).

'We are fighting not only for victory but also for a better world' (26.4.17).

'Why has America at last joined in the conflict? Some say it is the submarine, and some say it is Wilson; some say American honour has been hurt by Germany, and some say that America is afraid of standing alone and isolated after the war. It may be none or some or all of these things. Slowly, painfully, the people of America have come to recognise and understand what really is at stake. They have come to realise that it is once more the old historic issue, that it is the same as their old case of George Washington versus George Rex, the same as the case between North and South, but now broadened so as to cover the whole world: the oldest and greatest of all issues which has been

going on since the foundation of the world; the issue of freedom versus slavery, of democracy versus autocracy, of national self-government against Imperial Despotism' (1.5.17).

'Remember even the soul of Germany will have to be redeemed before the end' (1.5.17).

'Greater forces are fighting for us than our armies or the armies of our Allies. Unseen forces are being mobilised all over Christendom by German outrages and even deeper causes. The spirit of freedom is on the wing, the Great Creative Spirit is once more moving among the nations in their unspeakable anguish' (1.5.17).

'I have seen what strength a people can derive from the causes for which it is fighting. In my day and country I have seen freedom go under, and I have seen freedom rise again. And I have seen the same beaten people rise again to fight for the same freedom, no longer for themselves alone, but for the whole of the world' (1.5.17).

'We shall not see liberty perish from the face of the earth. We shall not see the human soul harnessed to any war machine or any State machine, however glorious or powerful it may be. For this reason we have taken up arms. For this reason the United States of America have forsaken their most sacred political tradition, which they have followed now for more than a hundred years, and come into the struggle—because they have found something greater and more valuable than tradition . . . human liberty' (16.5.17).

'If you ask me what is wrong with Europe I should say the moral basis in Europe, the bedrock of the Christian moral code, has become undermined and can no longer support all that superstructure of economic and industrial prosperity which the last century has built up on it, and the vast whole is now sagging' (22.5.17).

'We look forward to the day when that enormous

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power (Russia) which is now seething in the revolutionary crisis through which it is passing, will concentrate itself, organise itself, discipline itself, and then march again at the head of civilisation, and help to break down this much-vaunted German Kultur which is now the real threat to the civilisation of the world' (31.5.17).

'If America had not come in it would have been an old-world business, and any peace which would have followed in due course, would have been an old-world peace. But America has come in. . . . And the peace will be not merely a European peace, but a world peace' (31.5.17).

'Germany always will remain among the most potent of the nations. It would be the world's loss if she were permanently expelled from that high position. . . . All Germans but the Prussians have been a peaceful people always. But either from Frederick the Great or from Napoleon the Prussians learnt a devilish lesson' (June 1817).

'Political interference in military affairs already has caused great difficulties on this side. Study our mistakes. Avoid them' (June 1917).

'This war must end in the triumph of democracy, but that will not mean the universal democratisation of the nations which will be effected. Humanity does not work so fast. The French Revolution required a century of time in which to find function. . . .' (4.7.17).

'Within another ten years, had the war not come, freedom, which has never been properly organised, would have fallen a prey to her great enemies. . . . Germany might well have grown so powerful that she could have put humanity in bondage for another century' (1917).

'To me the most impressive thing about this war is not its slaughter of the guilty or the innocent, not its cost in property destroyed or money spent with maddened lavishness upon the instruments of death. It is the fact that it has linked



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together for combat the forces of democracy, that through it liberty is at last organised' (4.7.17).

'What you describe as the standstill of to-day is the result of yesterday's mistake—the fundamental mistake which consisted in believing that the only important thing was the raising of effectives. This war is above all a war of machinery' (18.9.17).

'Before accepting any form of peace those who have charge of the government of nations will have to think carefully about its terms, because on the peace we sign will depend for generations the peace and happiness of the whole world' (19.9.17).

'The stake is the greatest the human race has ever played for. Patience and confidence are all we now need to be certain of winning it' (18.9.17).

'To defeat Germany you need not advance to the Rhine; one strip of country is as good as another . . . and, believe me, long before the Rhine is reached, Germany will have sued for peace . . .' (5.10.17).

'If I were a German statesman I would carefully bear in mind the wise old Bismarckian policy, and avoid making the Slav the future historic enemy of the Teuton' (5.10.17).

'The published figures show that the submarine is being fought with rapidly increasing vigour and success. . . . Aerial warfare against the defenceless is the new weapon. . . . We are now most reluctantly forced to apply to the enemy the bombing policy he has applied to us. . . . We shall do our best to avoid abominations . . . to spare as far as possible the innocent and defenceless, who have always in the past enjoyed the protection of international law. But it is inevitable in any aerial offensive in enemy territory, now forced on us, that they should to some extent suffer . . .' (5.10.17).

'The blame must rest on an enemy who apparently re-

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cognises no laws, human or divine, who knows no pity or restraint, who sang *Te Deums* over the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and to whom the maiming and slaughter of innocent and helpless women and children appears a legitimate means of warfare. In the face of such abominations it is not for us meekly to fold our hands' (5.10.17).

'Far more than any empire is at stake in this great struggle. If we do not win the cause of civilisation will be set back for many a century' (10.10.17).

'We shall not make peace until Germany tells us "Our map is a scrap of paper; we shall tear it up" . . .' (25.10.17).

'Give us a good peace, and you need not now solve all the problems which confront the universe' (25.10.17).

'The German people can have peace to-morrow from the Entente, but they must come forward with genuine, honest proposals. Then will be the time to talk about peace. If they don't come forward with such proposals we are prepared to go on' (25.10.17).

'In all her previous wars, Prussia has been successful. She still sits on some portion of the conquered territory. But she must learn her lesson at last' (25.10.17).

'There is one great dominant war aim—the end of militarism, of standing armies, of all this threat which like a dark cloud is hanging over our fate. As long as we have this burden of militarism resting on Europe, as long as our young men from year to year have to be sacrificed to this Moloch of war, so long will you not be able to solve all those great social and industrial questions that are in front of us all' (25.10.17).

'We want to see disarmament or something that will prevent wars in future. We want to see a League of Nations with force behind it, so that in future there will be no danger or threat against the peace of the world' (25.10.17).

'I can only see the decay of civilisation—the suicide of

Western civilisation—if ever we are to have this cataclysm repeated' (25.10.17).

'German colonial aims are really not colonial, but are dominated by far reaching conceptions of world politics. Not colonies, but military power and strategic positions for exercising world power in future, are her real aims. Her ultimate objective in Africa is the establishment of a great Central African Empire' (30.1.18).

'When Germans speak of colonies they do not mean colonies in the old sense, but fresh points of departure, new points and bases in other continents for their lust of military domination' (30.1.18).

'Let the Germans remember that Russia, however pitiable her present condition, is and remains a Great Power, and that the great Slav Giant, now blind and turning the mill at Gaza, may yet make the whole proud structure of German Imperialism topple down in ruin and confusion' (4.5.18).

'German policy in her separate peace with Russia and Roumania proves that Germany wants annexations and indemnities. As Ludendorff says: "The Germans are not after a soft peace, but a German peace"' (4.5.18).

'This is my sixth speech to-day' (18.5.18).

'You are an optimistic people; you have always had successes—unfortunately, and you believe you cannot fail. . . . Ludendorff's offensive has been like a blinding flash of lightning on a dark night. . . . The German army and the German General Staff are fighting for victory. . . . They are not going to sacrifice, as they are now doing, hundreds of thousands of lives, perhaps a million of lives, in a few months, without having a definite object in view, and without a strong confidence that they are going to achieve that object. . . .

'I am persuaded this war will end in decisive victory one

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way or another and not merely in a stalemate, but when you talk about victory—victory is a very vague term—you must know what you mean. There are people who mean by an Allied victory that we must completely smash Germany, that we must march to Berlin, occupy the capital of the enemy and dictate terms there. I am not of that opinion. . . . I don't think out-and-out victory is possible any more for any group of nations in this war, because it will mean an interminable war. It will mean that decimated nations will be called upon to wage war for many years to come, and what would the result be? . . . The result may be that the civilisation we are out to save may be jeopardised itself. It may then be that in the end you will have the universal bankruptcy of government and you will let loose the forces of revolution which may engulf what we have so far built up in Europe. Civilisation is not an indestructible entity. . . . As it has been built up so it can be broken down, and you revert to barbarism' (18.5.18).

'If you are not going to fight the war to a smash-up, then surely it is necessary sometimes informally to find out how things are going and what your opponent is thinking and what advantage you may take of the situation as it is looked at by him' . . . (18.5.18).

## Chapter X

### SMUTS AND THE JEWS

#### I

As it is Smuts' principle to yield the lesser for the greater and to adjust himself to changing conditions; and as there are those who do not see the greater, or have a different conception of values, or will not yield anything to anything, or do not understand that life moves as the seasons move and this decade's habit of thought may be no more appropriate than summer clothes in winter or winter clothes in summer—as the world is stiff with rigid people, Smuts is sometimes described in South African as inconsistent.

In South Africa there are three particular classes who call Smuts inconsistent. The Dutch who, if he yields anything to the British, say he has abandoned them for the British; the British who, if he yields anything to the Dutch, say he has abandoned them for the Dutch; the negrophils who ask how he squares his principle of freedom with the state of the South African natives.

It will be seen, from his wartime speeches, that freedom is Smuts' dominant ideal. Partly this is hereditary. Boers have the passion for freedom in their blood. Yet, when most Boers speak of freedom, they mean personal rather than spiritual freedom. The blood of the Huguenots is not, after all, so strong in them as they suppose. Not more than a few hundred Huguenots fled to South Africa after the Revoca-

tion of the Edict of Nantes. Calvinism, no less than freedom, is a Boer inheritance. Predikants, if not so inevitably as in the past, still command the wills of their adherents. It is freedom just for themselves, in their own little old tight sort of Republic, many of them crave, and they are not concerned about the rest of humanity.

Smuts is concerned about the rest of humanity.

Near the beginning of his passion for freedom stands Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. That, apart from verses in school books, was the first poem he ever read and it directed his mind along the course it has since followed. (Poetry and the Bible have been, he says, the chief influences in his life.) He was then seventeen. At nineteen he wrote the essay he called *Homo Sum*, whose theme is slavery: spiritual and economic as well as physical; to the will of an Aristotle no less than the decrees of a pontiff; of God to man (if, indeed, God were subject to man's prayers) no less than of man to man. At twenty-four he was drawn to analyse Walt Whitman largely because he was moved by Whitman's poetry of freedom. At twenty-six, on account of the Jameson Raid, he gave up his birthplace in the Cape and his British nationality, to become a Republican under Kruger. For freedom (as he often said in the war years) he fought against the British in the Boer War, and with the British in the Great War. Freedom was the theme of his rectorial address at St. Andrews when he was sixty-four. At eighteen and at twenty-four and at fifty-seven—in schoolboy essay, in poetic analysis, in the philosophy he called Holism, he extolled personality, the individual soul of man, as the highest good in nature. As he approved the Russian revolution of March 1917, seeing here an autocracy overthrown for a republic, so, as it progressed, he abjured the Bolshevism that succeeded it.

He was at first inclined to regard Bolshevism as a sort of

illness—a virulent illness best isolated. In a memorandum for the Peace Conference he suggested that ‘fear of the spread of Bolshevism should be considered in favour of long-sighted peace.’ He wrote of ‘the danger that masses of people might be thrown into the hands of extremists who would regenerate mankind by destroying the whole existing fabric of society.’ His special fear was that Germany might cast in her lot with the Bolsheviks and organise a vast Red Army to renew the attack on Western Europe; and that not only the European states on the borders of Russia would be infected by the virus, but Asia and even America.

In his parting message to England on leaving for South Africa after the Great War he wrote, more tolerantly, but still as of something dangerous: ‘I am doubtful about the sort of policy we seem to be pursuing there.’ (He meant the way Britain was taking sides in Russia.) ‘Russia can only be saved internally by Russians themselves, working on Russian methods and ideas. She is a case of national pathology, of a people with a sick soul, and only Russian ideas can work a cure. Our military forces, our contributions of tanks and other war material, may temporarily bolster up one side, but the real magnitude of the problem is quite beyond such expedients.

‘Leave Russia, remove the blockade, adopt a policy of friendly neutrality and Gallio-like impartiality to all factions. It may well be that the only ultimate hope for Russia is a sobered, purified Soviet system; and that may be far better than the Tsarism to which our present policy seems inevitably tending. If we have to appear on the Russian scene at all, let it be as impartial benevolent friends and helpers and not as military and political partisans. Be patient with sick Russia, give her time and sympathy, and await the results of her convalescence.’

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But he had hardly returned to South Africa when Bolshevism appeared—in South Africa! There was a red revolution. There was serious bloodshed. He has never recovered from that shock. To-day he still speaks of Bolshevism as the child of misery, a spiritual devaluation, a reversion, a going back to the Kaffir system. He classes it with Fascism and Hitlerism which he describes as brigandage, tyranny in the Greek sense. They all seem to him to have the same result, the denial of law to encompass the downfall of the individual. Susceptible as he remains to the hopes of the future, he does not appreciate the essential difference between the countries whose thought is for themselves and a country whose thought is for humanity, nor admit that the world is already sick with Russia's sickness, nor discern in Russia's five or ten or twenty years' plans a work done (as of a sick scientist's experiments on his own body) from which all sufferers may benefit. He does not see, past the negation of religion, Russia's subconscious basis of Christianity—perhaps, fundamentally, the nearest to Christ's meaning.

It is true that a person, having an easy life, might not wish to be a Russian in Russia to-day. Would a person, in good health, wish to go to a hospital? But an unemployed pauper might well crave the hard security of Russia, as a sick man a hospital's scheduled care.

Smuts sees that the individual is restricted in Russia and, although it is his principle to take what he calls the long view, he does not, in Bolshevism, look beyond the immediate result and accordingly condemns it.

Yet here is the false position in which, concerning the restriction of the individual, he himself is placed. No one has done so much to restrict the individual Asiatic in South Africa as Smuts, and, although he would like to be remembered as one who has helped the native and actually has a



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personal sympathy with him, it cannot be said he has greatly eased his situation in South Africa.

Right up to the days of the Great War, Gandhi was struggling against Smuts for the rights of South African Indians. Even during the Great War in England, and a few weeks after declaring the fight to be for 'equity, justice, fairness and equality', a few days after his great League speech, Smuts was saying: 'If we are to solve our native question, it is useless to run black and white at the same moment, and to subject them to the same machinery of legislation. White and black are different, not only in colour, but also in soul; they are different in political structure, and their political institutions should be different.'

The difficulty in South Africa against which Smuts' ideal breaks itself is that the Asiatics are low caste and of a poor habit of life; that the natives are savages; that the coloured peoples are as nearly four to one compared with the whites; that a white man assisting a native feels himself in the same danger as a small man pulling a big man out of a swamp—the only result of his effort may be that he himself is dragged into the swamp. As Smuts puts it: 'Superior civilised races have been lost in quicksands of African blood'—though, it may be added, not because their actions have been quixotic.

There is a further difficulty. Imagine the little man who is trying to help the big man in the swamp having all the time to fight another little man. As recently as August 1935 the anti-government candidate in a by-election based his appeal to an electorate which generously supported him on such a claim as this:

'The National Party stands for the destruction of the British connection; for the establishment of an absolutely independent republic, for the spiritual and national rehabilitation of the Boer nation, which was murdered by the three-year, freebooter war of England.' And some support-

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ers of the government candidate made the appeal on his behalf that he had rebelled against England in 1914.

It is true that every now and then amiabilities occur between one section and another of the South African European population; in a heat of emotion, mysteriously generated by Smuts, they melt together; Smuts benevolently surveys them: Now we are united. Now we are brothers. Now we can at last do something. Now we will make this country great.

Yet there is hardly union in one part before there is disintegration in another; there is always the fear or threat of disintegration; the strongest possible motive for disintegration would be a divergence of opinion on the native problem. Smuts combines two fears when he thinks of the native: the fear of what may happen to white civilisation in South Africa, the fear of what may happen between one white man and another in South Africa.

In computing the worth of white civilisation against black liberty, since he feels both cannot grow, without restraint, together, he places first white civilisation. He speaks of self-government for the native no less than for the European; of 'larger areas all over South Africa, inhabited entirely by blacks—looking after themselves according to their own ways of life and forms of government'; of the possibility even that one day the black man may come to possess all Africa. But it remains that before the crouching black man—crouching in humility, yet crouching also (the dread is) to spring, Smuts' principle fails, falls and breaks.

His ideal is, in short, not consistent, not absolute. It yields to the urgently practical. Seeing the evidences in Africa of old white civilisations lost before, or within, black peoples, he fears the results to his own civilisation of a liberty for the black man undifferentiated from liberty for the white man. When, therefore, he says liberty he means white man's li-

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berty as distinct from black man's liberty. From his philosophy of making whole he excludes precisely his highest ideal—human privilege, which he isolates, unmeeting and unmerging, in bubbles of different colours.

The necessity gives him no happiness. He insists then all the more on the individual's great and equal rights within these different spheres.

### 2

He began to talk about these equal rights as soon as he and Botha set about gathering a party around them, two or three years after the Boer War. Their association, he said, was open to all white men, whether Boer, Jew or Briton... the hand of brotherhood was to be extended to all white men, no matter what their creed or nationality. The only qualification was a white skin. And because Jews were beginning to be unpopular in South Africa as in other countries; and also because the children of those Russian Jews 'with the bodies and minds of the downtrodden... would be the Spinozas and Maimonides of the future'; and again because 'nothing in the whole bloody history of the human race compares with the history of the Jewish people'; and 'our love for our own people must be extended to other peoples and other countries... I do not know of any other people on earth who, from their own love and bitter and sorrowful experience, is more able to teach that than the Jewish people'—for these reasons he specifically welcomed Jews. He has specifically, for the same reasons, welcomed them from the earliest to the latest years of his influence; is to-day their leading, and accepted, perhaps their only active and consistent friend among the statesmen of the world; and, remembering how once he dreamt of championing all those who were heavy laden, he thinks of his work for the Jews as a justification of his life. He calls it that.

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He was now, in the Great War, barely arrived in England when 'fate', as he said, 'linked his fortunes with the Jewish people'. He meant Mr. Lloyd George's offer to him of the Palestine Command; his position on the committee, under Curzon, that dealt with Eastern affairs; his organisation of a Palestine campaign early in 1918; and his particular association with Britain's promise to the Jews, in November, 1917, of a national home in Palestine.

From the giving of that promise until this day he has made it his work, in the face of opposing influences, to support the Jews' right to a home in Palestine.

The chief of those opposing influences was—not T. E. Lawrence himself, who had no hostility to Jews, but the cause he fostered of an Arab renaissance. Where Smuts wished to see the Jews great again, Lawrence wished to see the Arabs great again.

A simultaneous revival of two Semitic peoples might seem an interesting possibility. The twist, however, that had led the wandering Jews to seek cities and the wandering Arabs to seek wastes had preserved the Jews and reduced the Arabs, and the Arabs could obviously not rise as fast as the Jews—and feared them.

This separated the two conceptions and it is perhaps the sense of belonging in an opposite camp from Lawrence that so curiously tinges Smuts' approval of Lawrence with an indefinable colour of disapproval.

### 3

When the war was over the Emir Feisal (Colonel T. E. Lawrence behind him) appeared before the Peace Conference at Paris saying: 'The Arabs expect the Powers to think of them as one potential people. . . . For this the Great Powers will have to ensure us open internal frontiers, common

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railways and telegraphs and uniform systems of education. . . . In return we can offer them little but gratitude.'

The Powers, duly allured (except the French) by this bargain, thereupon gave the Arabs two or three kingdoms, and Lawrence resigned his decorations, rank and name as a protest against the immoral conduct of his country in not fulfilling its obligations to the Arabs.

He meant there were payments due to the Arabs for work done by them which had been diverted to the Jews and French—particularly the French.

As far as the French were concerned Smuts agreed with Lawrence. The French had more than their due in the East. As far as the Jews were concerned, he disagreed with Lawrence. So had the Arabs more than their due in the East. Justice apart, he had natural sympathy with neither French nor Arabs. Not many Boers have. Though there is French blood in them and a tradition too of republicanism and liberty, they like, in general, to think of themselves as Teutons rather than Latins. (The fundamental reason for this may be that, in a country where black people abound and a dark skin is suspect, mere blondness is a benison.) Then, too, the French seem very *continental* to them. So, curiously enough, do their main ancestors, the Hollanders, seem very continental to them, and also they remember with displeasure those Hollanders Kruger imported to run his affairs because his own people were not yet sufficiently educated. Of all Europeans, therefore, the Boers are attracted most by the hearty Germans, who, in addition, are the only people to make propaganda among them.

Smuts himself likes the Germans better than the French because the German mind runs to those beautiful hypotheses which the little ugly facts of the French mind destroy; and Smuts is the sort of man who prefers the exaltation of infinite quest to the dull certainty of due arrival.

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As to Arabs, a Bedouin Arab quite naturally cannot seem so romantically strange to a South African as to a European, for the South African very well knows dark skinned peoples: peoples resembling, indeed, the Arabs—and with reason, since Arab blood is in them. All his life the South African has been surrounded by millions of these dark peoples who, like the Bedouins, live in huts or wander over the land; are more courtly, courageous and poetic than he will admit; and (unless civilisation compels them) like the Bedouins again, do, make, grow, want and own nothing.

Smuts thinks as a European rather than as a South African—yet dark skinned people cannot seem exotic to him.

What Smuts says about the Arabs is that they were not only paid—but overpaid—for services never adequately rendered and in the end not required, since the fate of the Central Empires was assured before the delayed Palestine offensive could take place. And the Jews, he says, got a vague promise neither easy to fulfil nor generously interpreted.

Smuts finds the Jews less fascinating than Lawrence (at least in the beginning) found the Arabs. 'They haven't', he says, 'the Arabs' attractive manners. They do not warm the heart by graceful subjection. They make demands. They are a bitter, recalcitrant little people, and, like the Boers, impatient of leadership and ruinously quarrelsome among themselves. They see God in the shape of an oriental potentate. . . .' It is not, he recently said in a speech, because he loves the Jews better than other people that he supports them—'I love justice,' he said.

And so, if, the matter of treaty rights apart, Smuts has to consider which of the two races is, humanly speaking, more entitled to Palestine, he feels that the harried Jews have no other home, and the nomad Arabs enormous kingdoms; and that when Jews possessed Palestine, the morality on which civilisation bases itself was born, and the world's

greatest literature and Jesus Christ; and when Arabs possessed Palestine the land that once flowed with milk and honey became a desert, as fertile lands have also become in South Africa after the natives have occupied them.

With regard to the legal, as against what Smuts feels to be the moral, aspect—the question of treaty rights—there are these facts that came to be reviewed by Smuts and his colleagues on the Eastern Committee:

The war was not three months old when the following telegram was sent:

‘Lord Kitchener’s salaams to Sherif Abdullah. . . . If the Arab nation assist England in this war that has been forced upon us by Turkey, England will guarantee that no internal intervention takes place in Arabia and will give Arabs every assistance against external aggression.

‘It may be that an Arab of true race will assume the Khalifate at Mecca or Medina, and so good come by the help of God out of the evil that is now occurring. . . .’

With this telegram went a letter to King Hussein:

‘If the Emir of Mecca is willing to assist Great Britain in this conflict, Great Britain is willing, recognising and respecting the sacred and unique office of the Emir Hussein, to guarantee the independence, rights and privileges of the Sherifate against all external foreign aggression, in particular that of the Ottomans. Till now we have defended Islam in the person of the Turks; henceforward it shall be in that of the noble Arabs. . . .’

A year later, about the time it was decided to withdraw from the Dardanelles, and desperation was over everything, a general pledge was given Hussein that, in return for Arab co-operation, Britain was prepared to recognise and support Arab independence in certain territories of which Palestine and the Syrian interior formed a part. There was, at the same time, a conflicting clause in the treaty between Russia,

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France and Great Britain which said: 'With a view to securing the religious interests of the Entente Powers, Palestine, with the Holy Places, is separated from Turkish territory and subject to a special régime to be determined by agreement between Russia, France and Great Britain.'

In conflict also with the pledge to Hussein was an agreement (the Sykes-Picot) made in May 1916 between the English and French which gave the French a free hand on the Syrian coast and a veiled protectorate over the interior. And in further conflict there took place in November, 1917, that offer to the Jews of a national home in Palestine which Smuts described as 'one of the historic achievements of the war'. The offer was in the shape of a document signed, for the Cabinet, by Balfour as Foreign Secretary, presented to one of the Rothschilds, and endorsed by the principal Allied Powers and the United States.

As the various pledges to the Arabs had been made to win their adherence, so Palestine for the Jews had been suggested (in Smuts' words, when there seemed danger of its being forgotten) 'to rally Jewish sympathy for the Allied cause at the darkest hour of the war'—to rally, in fact, the influence of American Jews in the days when American intervention was being sought.

It is probable that the value of the bait was exaggerated, since Jews important in the world were not, at that time, alive to the idea of Palestine; it was a dream of the down-trodden. However, America was not yet in the war when Mr. Lloyd George and Balfour, already attracted by the romance of Zionism, discussed with various Zionist leaders this plan of a national home, and formed the impression that Jews, in general, would welcome it.

The pledge had even more to do with a certain promise. At Manchester University there was a professor of chemistry called Chaim Weizmann—the leader afterwards (the



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greatest, says Smuts, since Moses) of the Jewish movement. Dr. Chaim Weizmann invented a process of vital importance in the manufacture of explosives and, offering his invention to the government, refused any honour or reward for himself, but asked the boon of British recognition of Palestine as a national home for the Jews.

‘That’, says Mr. Lloyd George, ‘was the fount and origin of the famous (Balfour) Declaration’, which read:

‘His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of that object, it being understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by the Jews in any other country.’

Here, however, are some further facts:

With regard to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, both Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary in 1915, and the French themselves made it an enabling condition that it was dependent on Arab approval. Before completing it, accordingly, the framers of the agreement had gone down to Hussein and fully explained it to him.

Hussein said, in due course, that he had never heard anything about the agreement.

The British knew otherwise, but they wished it were true, they wished they themselves had never heard anything about the agreement. Smuts came to call it ‘a millstone round our necks’.

They lashed their minds over it—over how they could get rid of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. They said the Arabs had the right to choose their own foreign advisers. They tried to make an exchange. They dreamt of a cancellation of treaties and a clean slate. Nothing, really, would have pleased them more than to satisfy Lawrence and the Arabs.

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They were not in the position to do so. Not all Lawrence's pains and pleadings could get them into the position to do so. The French wouldn't have it.

The time came to make treaties and, the stronger Lawrence's protestations, the nobler Feisal's demeanour, the more the French became convinced of their own grievances and rights. 'Thanks', they said, 'to the complicity of British agents, Emir Feisal—a nomad chief transformed into the representative of all Arabic-speaking peoples—terrorises a population whose culture and historic traditions should revolt against Bedouin domination. His emissaries everywhere instal officials in his name, hoist his flag in defiance of justifiable remonstrances, and, with the assistance of the most undesirable elements, organise his triumphant reception by towns where it pleases him to celebrate a premature success. The British Government makes a monthly allowance of £200,000 and the Emir Feisal spends most of it in gifts of money or of kind. . . .'

France, they elaborated, refused to be deprived of her 'heritage in the Levant'. From the crusades to 1860 she had exercised, they said, the most profound influence over Syria, which abounded in her intellectual adherents. Since 1649, when Louis XVI had given the Christian Syrians 'letters of protection', she had maintained a benevolent guidance over Syria. She was not impressed by the Emir Feisal's declaration about the despairing appeals of the Syrians to his father the King Hussein, nor by the protests of his adviser, the Colonel Lawrence, nor by England's support of their joint contentions. Had not England a great enough mandatory hold in the East and control now of Palestine to defend the Suez Canal as a strategical buffer to Egypt? The mandate over Syria was France's sacred due. She would fight (and she did) to enforce this sacred due.

There remains the matter of Britain's promise that the

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areas set free by Arabs should be theirs. The case here, Smuts pointed out at the time, was that the Arabs actually arrived in Beirut a few hours before the British, and, to give colour to their subsequent claim, hastily set up a government in advance of the British. There was, said Smuts, no substance in that government; and, whether one liked it or not, the French were entitled to Beirut and the associated Lebanon.

The moral question whether the Arabs, as Smuts wonders, fulfilled their side of the bargain is a matter of his feeling against Lawrence's. Hussein had, in fact, to be warned that it was 'most essential you should spare no effort to attach all the Arab people to our united cause, and urge them to afford no assistance to our enemies.

'It is on the success of these efforts and in the more active measures which the Arabs may hereafter take in support of our cause when the time for action comes that the permanence and strength of our agreement must depend.'

Hussein did not take the 'active measures' demanded of him until June 1916 when the Arabs formally revolted against the Turks, and it was only with the advent of Lawrence some months later and the monthly present of the two hundred thousand pounds that there was any heart to the revolt. Who, however, can measure the passion behind a task not susceptible to measurement, and its absolute performance? The pledge to Hussein was not cancelled; as far as Palestine was concerned, it was broken or not according to the interpretation placed on the malleable Balfour Declaration; all arguments, if not grievances, were disposed of when the whole business of treaties and promises became a matter for adjustment at the Peace Conference.

### 4

Sometimes, in his enthusiasm, Smuts says such things as 'one of the great objects we fought for in the war was to

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provide a national home for the Jewish people. . . . We shall stand for a national home for the Jews and look upon that as an act of national reparation which will rank as one of the historic achievements in the world.' Or 'it was an idea born in depression, suffering and sorrow like all great things', or 'the Balfour Declaration has become the foundation of a great policy of international justice . . . the greatest, most ancient historic wrong has at last been undone, and the prophecies of the restoration enshrined in the world's greatest poetry have come true. . . .'

When there were British leaders who saw in the Palestine mandate a possibility of trouble to Britain outweighing its advantages, Smuts asked the Cabinet to risk it. 'It will affect', he said, 'Jewish national opinion, and nationally they are a great people. . . .'

The end of the argument was that England, as Smuts says to-day, was in possession and stayed in possession. . . .

About October 1917 Bible names became current news. Gaza, Beersheba and the plains of Philistine; Jaffa, the Jordan and Jerusalem.

On December 9th Jerusalem capitulated, and on December 11th General Allenby entered it, with a small bodyguard, on foot, like a pilgrim.

### 5

But the taking of Jerusalem was not the taking of Palestine. It might have been, Mr. Lloyd George suggests, if the '600,000 casualties in the fiascos on the Western Front' had not so depleted resources in men that victory could no longer be exploited on any front; if it had been realised 'that the forces at Allenby's disposal were overwhelmingly superior to any the Turks could muster, and that if he had pressed forward there was no Turkish army that could offer any substantial resistance' (three thousand, nine hundred

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rifles for a sixteen mile front); if General Allenby had not been discouraged and restrained by the War Office. He himself was so intent on conquest from the East that he decided 'to get an independent view,' and to this end the War Cabinet presently deputed Smuts 'to proceed to Egypt with full power on their behalf to confer with Generals Allenby and Marshall or their representatives, the Naval Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, the Government of Egypt, and any other authorities in regard to the military situation in the Middle East, and to advise the War Cabinet as soon as possible on the best use and co-ordination of all our resources in that theatre, with a view to the most vigorous prosecution of the war against Turkey.'

On February 5th, 1918, then, Smuts left London, with four advisers, for the Middle East; next day he saw Sir Henry Wilson at Versailles and, at Rome, the first Lord of the Admiralty and the Director General of Military Transport. He went to inspect the camp through which the troops would have to pass on their way to Salonika and Egypt and arranged for its enlargement.

On February 11th, he reached Alexandria, considered the matter of landing troops there for General Allenby's advance, and on the same day left for Cairo. He stayed at Cairo a few days, discussing with various officials the situation in Palestine, questions of strategy, transport and diplomacy. By diplomacy was meant British relationships to French Arabs and Jews. Then he proceeded to Allenby's headquarters.

He returned with Allenby to Egypt and they there consulted with other military representatives.

Their decision (Smuts reported) was to make of the campaign against Turkey, not a series of disconnected operations, but a single co-ordinated scheme; and to that end they proposed to investigate whether they should conduct a

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combined convergent offensive from Mesopotamia and Palestine or concentrate on an offensive from one of the two, leaving the other, for the time being, defensive.

They decided against an expedition from Mesopotamia—such an expedition, said Smuts, would add five hundred miles to the already long line of communications, necessitate much railway construction under adverse climatic conditions, leave the right flank exposed, and, should Allenby's force in the end be unable to meet it at Aleppo, prove fundamentally useless.

The conditions for an advance in Palestine and Syria were favourable. The left flank of this advance would rest throughout along the sea—which was important from the point of view of strategy, supplies and communications; offered an opportunity of continuous naval co-operation and an opportunity too of threatening the right flank of the Turks.

On the right flank the minor operations that were being carried on 'with extraordinary courage and organising power by Major Lawrence' could be of assistance in locking up a portion of the Turkish force and in guarding the line of communications on that flank; and there was also the advantage that the inhabitants were friendly. . . .

So both flanks of the Turks would be continually harassed, and Allenby would not be tied down to a single line of advance—he would have, between sea and desert, a width of front that, by giving him freedom of movement to destroy the enemy forces and attain his geographical objectives, would allow him the fullest use of his superior numbers. . . .

For these reasons Smuts advocated reducing the Mesopotamian force to a minimum, postponing any Mesopotamian projects such as railway building, and concentrating on Palestine.

Towards his plan of a Palestine campaign he made re-

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commendations concerning shipping, aviation, transport, labour and materials. He discussed, in particular, the railway position.

The question of Allenby's advance depended chiefly, he said, on rapidity of railway construction. The object of the first phase of the operations would be to compel the Turks to evacuate Damascus before the inland column, and accept a decisive battle with the main column on a line parallel with their communications. To follow up a success and so achieve a decisive result Allenby needed freedom of movement; he needed a railway built at the rate—not, as now, of half a mile, but of two miles a day. A slow rate of progress would do no more than keep the enemy back at a great cost in Allenby's men, and meanwhile, too, the enemy could get reinforcements and improve his own communications. Two Canadian railway battalions and equipment from the Western Front were urgently necessary. . . .

In addition to the matter of force, Smuts considered (as ever) the matter of persuasion. The Turks were working hard to detach the Arabs. The Arabs should accordingly be informed that their rights would be respected under the Balfour Declaration, and despite the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The Turks, again, hesitated to make peace for fear of a German-Bulgarian seizure of Constantinople; and they should therefore be assured that if they made peace Constantinople would be taken from them by neither the Entente nor the Central Empires, and that after the war they would receive financial and economic assistance towards the rebuilding of their state. . . .

Smuts returned to England. It was all perfectly arranged. The campaign was to start late in March or early in April. Mesopotamia would go on the defensive and send men to Palestine. Nothing remained but merely to take the country. . . .

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There came the German offensive of March 21st. The British soldiers in Allenby's army were sent to France and Indians replaced them. The Indians were raw and had to be trained. On October 1st (the campaign advised by Smuts in February having gone, as he says, like clockwork—but for the Arabs' failure to blow up the Yarunk bridges) a division of Australians achieved its objective and took Damascus. On the 31st the Turks capitulated—but the war was already over.

Smuts had written to Mr. Lloyd George nearly a year and a half ago that 'the capture of Jerusalem would be a most serious undertaking', and 'the role of this army mainly a defensive one'; and he had for these reasons refused the Palestine Command.

For having done so—for having refused—he comforts himself to-day by remembering that, whatever the other possibilities might have been, the Egyptian Expeditionary Force had, in fact, to wait for the accomplishment of its work until this accomplishment was, as he gloomily says, no longer necessary.

But as to the capture of Jerusalem, which after all had gone brilliantly, Smuts' only duty was to frame, at Mr. Lloyd George's request, 'a telegram to Allenby that will suggest to him the importance that we attach to the conquest of Palestine, and the delight his feat has given the nation'.

The nation was in tragic need of consolation.



## Chapter XI

### 'LAND OF MY FATHERS'

#### I

**D**uring the second half of 1917 the British lost four hundred thousand men in an unproductive offensive; for months the French had been unable to give them effective assistance; the French Government and military authorities had not even dared to demand such assistance; the Russians under Lenin and Trotsky were in the revolution that resulted in peace with Germany; the whole Italian army, except a quarter of a million prisoners and a third of a million killed, wounded and missing, and another hundred thousand or so departed, lay in retirement behind the Piave: Passchendaele had happened and Caporetto.

#### 2

It was in the middle of September that, as Ludendorff records, 'it became necessary to decide for the attack on Italy in order to prevent the collapse of Austria-Hungary'. Accordingly, at two o'clock on the morning of October 24th, while the British were blowing up the soil of Flanders so that afterwards they themselves could not cross it, while the Italians were disputing whether they should defend or attack, Ludendorff, with seven German and nine Austrian divisions, began a bombardment which brought the Germans to Caporetto that same afternoon. Next day Capello, the 'offensive general, retreated, and

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on October 27th, Cadorna, the defensive general, also retreated.

On October 28th, Smuts wrote the following letter to Mr. Lloyd George:

'My dear Prime Minister,

'I regret that my going to South Wales will prevent me from attending the War Cabinet and raising the question of the situation in Italy. I therefore write you this brief note to put my views before you in the earnest hope that you will yourself raise the matter to-morrow.

'The extent of the Italian disaster is not quite clear to me from the telegrams which I have seen but must in any case be great and may yet assume dimensions which will frighten the Italians out of the war, with very far reaching results for the Allied cause. We have not appreciated the danger in time and it is clear now that Cadorna's fears were justified and that our General Staff was not properly informed about the movements from the Russian to the Italian front. But late as it is, I think we should do our duty and not let the Italians entertain the despairing feeling that they are left alone to bear the onslaught of both the Austrian and German armies. The Italians will hold out more firmly if they are assured in time that we stand by them not only on the Western but also on the Italian front. I suggest that we declare at once to the Italian Government our readiness to send four or five divisions (if they are required) with a great proportion of heavy artillery to their assistance as soon as the movement can be effected, and that if your offer is accepted the French Government be asked not to press for our taking over any of their front line while the divisions are in Italy. The French might prefer to join in an Italian undertaking, but in view of the continual friction between French and Italians I consider it important that the reinforcements should be only under British command. The

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transportation arrangements should be pushed with the greatest energy so as to bring our reinforcements to Italy before the disaster has become too great. We must not add Italy to our Serbian and Roumanian disasters. I hope to be back in Cabinet on Thursday morning.’

Mr. Lloyd George took Smuts’ advice and asked Robertson immediately to send the Italians the necessary assurance.

### 3

The reason for Smuts’ going to South Wales was that the Welsh coalminers were on the edge of revolt. Men were needed to make good the losses in Flanders, and the coalmines were the last great reservoir for fighters and workers. Now, among the mines, anti-war agitators were working up a strike. Supporters of the government asked that Smuts might come and help them. Mr. Lloyd George thought it a wise plan, and before Smuts left, he said to him: ‘Remember my fellow countrymen are great singers!’

Smuts himself describes his adventure among the miners:

‘I arrived at Cardiff the next morning, where they gave me a great reception. I became a Doctor of the University. That afternoon I went to the coalfields where I was due to arrive that night. I found that practically the whole way from Cardiff to the coalfields was lined by mobs on strike. But they were interested to see this man from South Africa. I really think they expected me to be a black man, and they seemed very much astonished that I was not.

‘I got out everywhere and made little speeches. Finally I arrived at Tonypany, which was the centre of this great strike. There I had my first meeting of the series which had been arranged for me to address. In front of me there was a vast crowd numbering thousands and thousands of angry miners, and when I got up I could feel the electricity in the air.

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‘I started by saying: “Gentlemen, I come from far away, as you know. I do not belong to this country. I have come a very long way to do my bit in this war, and I am going to talk to you to-night about this trouble. But I have heard in my country that the Welsh are among the greatest singers in the world, and before I start, I want you first of all to sing me some of the songs of your people.”’

‘Somebody in the huge mass struck up “Land of My Fathers”. Every soul present sang in Welsh, and with the deepest fervour. When they had finished, they just stood, and I could see that the thing was over. I could judge the effect on myself. I said: “Well, Gentlemen! It is not necessary for me to say much more to-night. You know what has happened on the Western Front. You know your comrades in their tens of thousands are risking their lives. You know that the front is just as much here as anywhere else. The trenches are in Tonypany, and I am sure you are actuated by the same spirit as your comrades in France. It is not necessary for me to add anything. You know it as well as I do, and I am sure you are going to defend the Land of your Fathers of which you have sung here to-night and that you will defend it to the uttermost—and that no trouble you may have with the government about pay or anything else will ever stand in the way of your defence of the Land of your Fathers.” That is all I said.

‘I do not think I spoke for more than a few minutes. I went on to the next meeting, and repeated the same thing there, and so right on through the coalfields. That night I took the train back to London in time to attend the Cabinet the next afternoon. When I arrived at the Cabinet they said to me “What has happened? All the men are at work. How did you settle it?” I said “Well, it is news to me that the men are at work.” That great song helped us to win through at the very moment when a paralysing blow was

being struck at us—when we were being told by our navy that they only had reserves of coal for a week, and if this strike went on for another week, we should be paralysed and finished. It was then that “Land of my Fathers” saved us.’

The day after Smuts’ return to London, Mr. Lloyd George wrote to Painlevé suggesting that, for the better co-ordination of military action, political representatives of the Entente, together with their military, naval and economic experts, should meet as an interallied council. The French agreed to this, and in order, as Smuts had written, that the Italians should not ‘entertain the despairing feeling that they are left alone to bear the onslaught of both the Austrian and German armies’, Mr. Lloyd George proposed, as a further demonstration of unity, that the British and French Prime Ministers should go to the Italian front and there meet the Italian Prime Minister. To this also the French agreed. Mr. Lloyd George took with him Robertson and Smuts, and the place where they met the Italians was Rapallo.

Smuts describes how they found the Italians ‘in a state bordering on despair. They demanded from the Allies’, he says, ‘reinforcements on a scale so outrageous and, in fact, impossible, that neither Painlevé nor Foch could even answer them without fury. And, as for Foch, he added to his fury the most obvious contempt.

“The Italians and the French quarrelled all morning. At luncheon Lloyd George said to me: “Those are dangerous tactics.” I agreed with him. I always feel quarrels are dangerous tactics. When I can’t contain my own temper I walk away.

‘In the afternoon I saw the sort of genius Lloyd George is. He took the initiative. He was kind and smooth. He told the Italians he understood their position and sympathised with their claims. They were entitled, he said, to all the re-

inforcements they wanted. What did they want? They had only to say. He guaranteed that their wishes would be fulfilled.

‘You can imagine how that sort of talk overwhelmed the Italians after the talk of the morning. They were absolutely nonplussed and absolutely stilled. And, moreover, when it came to the point, they hadn’t thought, and they didn’t know and they couldn’t say what exactly they wanted; and they didn’t dare put into clear hard figures the things they had been ranting about to the French; and when, later on, we went into those figures, we found they were quite moderate. . . .’

Smuts had originally imagined that ‘the Rapallo Conference would be the starting point for a new Europe not composed of isolated competitive individuals and states but consisting of an international society which would be the expression of human solidarity and a secure guarantee for peace’—in short, he saw, growing out of Rapallo, Geneva. What did actually grow out of Rapallo was the Supreme War Council which came to sit at Versailles, and at Versailles the permanent military representatives and their staffs were established.

Adjourned now to Paris, Smuts called on Woodrow Wilson’s emissary, Colonel House. ‘He has grown to be the lion of the hour,’ Colonel House recorded of him in his *Intimate Papers*. ‘My expectations were unusually high; it was not alone what I had heard of him, but I have been impressed by his speeches and statements, which I have read from time to time. He had just returned from Italy. He spoke enthusiastically of the plan for the new Supreme War Council. This was valuable, for I have confidence in his opinion. He is one of the few men I have met in the government who do not seem tired. He is alert, energetic and forceful.’

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Colonel House had mentioned in an interview a few days before that Americans regarded Smuts as one of the greatest men of the present day and that President Wilson wished he could visit America.

The idea that Smuts should go to America was also being urged by Northcliffe. Northcliffe had been to America on a mission of propaganda, and found that no one, as he cabled from America, knew the English achievement. All people heard about was the doings of the French and Italians, who were flooding the country with their propaganda. For that matter, there was even an idea, since there was so much Canadian news and so little English, that the Canadians were doing all the fighting while the English conserved their forces in England. He thought a big man should go over to enlighten the Americans concerning England. ‘As to big men’, he added, ‘the only big military man who could help here is Smuts. . . .’

But Smuts could not be spared in Europe, so Sir F. E. Smith (afterwards Lord Birkenhead) went instead.

## Chapter XII

### 'VICTORY IS A VAGUE TERM'

#### I

**T**he Italians were fleeing to the Piave ('I found soldiers without their rifles', writes Mr. Lloyd George, 'who had fled hundreds of miles from the battle-fields') when Haig reiterated his conviction of success next year, insisting that the best chance of a decisive victory still lay in concentrating on the Flanders front and forcing the enemy from the Belgian coast.

His heart remained unshaken to the end. He never failed either in hope or the readiness to take responsibility. Through excess or lack of imagination no risk deterred him and no loss appalled him. A few months ago he had expected a decisive victory this very year. In September he said: 'I see no reason to apprehend failure.' In October he said victory could not fail since the German army was showing signs of exhaustion and also the people; and the boys due to come forward now must be of low fighting value.

After the Canadians took Passchendaele Ridge and village on November 3rd (a gain of four or five miles at a cost of four hundred thousand men) he said his troops had already accomplished a great deal and success would surely attend an offensive early in 1918. When, in the last months of the war, Smuts arrived at the front to say he would have the government's support if he chose to keep his reserves behind the line, he answered that he knew the blame would



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fall on himself if Foch's dispositions proved wrong, but he took the risk and accepted the responsibility. When success followed those dispositions and the Cabinet feared he might be lured ‘into enterprises’, as Mr. Churchill says, ‘beyond the strength of troops who had suffered so much’, he pushed onward still, and now to the end.

Field Marshals Wilson and French temperamentally and habitually disagreed with Haig's calculations and prophecies. They did not, in June, expect a victory before the end of the year. They denied that the German army was exhausted or German boys (any more than English boys) would next year be of low fighting value, or that the morale of the French population was reduced. They did not think the Allies' armies would be significantly larger in 1918 than the armies of their enemies. They doubted whether the Americans would arrive at full strength before 1919 and until the Americans were at full strength the Allies could not defeat the Germans. They were not sure that victory would come even in 1919. They demanded a defensive policy. . . .

Robertson supported Haig. He pointed out that Russia was again in revolution; that Italy had never been wholeheartedly in the war and was at the moment badly defeated; that France had no reserves and was undergoing a series of political crises.

In these circumstances should the British, he demanded, now sit and wait on a demoralising costly defensive for the enemy's blow, for the attack coming they knew not when nor where—should they wait through eighteen months for a 1919 that might never arrive?

He was for making ready to the fullest extent, and for anything that might happen, by the spring of 1918. Mr. Churchill felt the same. To make ready for 1918, he said, did not preclude being ready for 1919. Success was not to

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be won by waiting for the enemy's exhaustion, but by attacking and beating him. A concentration of effort on a great scale was necessary. Men and machines had to be enormously increased.

At first four or five hundred thousand men were called for and these, it was thought, might, during the next year, be found in Britain and Ireland without increasing the military age. But then the Army Council found that half a million men were not enough—they needed three times half a million men—and not within a year, but by June, 1918.

While members of Parliament protested and newspapers agitated and strikes burst out, munition works, fields, offices, mills and shops were combed for more men. The previously rejected were re-examined. French had asked why the 1920 class of German boys should be of lower fighting value than their predecessors if the English boys were not. But sometimes (varying heroism unparalleled, as Smuts said, in the world's history) they were. Only ten days after the triumph of the tanks—their first—at Cambrai, Smuts was enquiring into what he called the Cambrai disaster, and he found this disaster was due to the panic of new men.

### 2

The triumph of the tanks at Cambrai on November 20th was, taken in itself, the only heartening result in the autumn offensive of 1917. It was an experiment, a success and a lesson. Tanks had been used a great many times during 1916 and 1917, but in small numbers, without confidence and without effect. For three years the principle of attack had been a preliminary bombardment which gained an initial success for the attacker and was then followed by a long battle with little further advance and heavy losses on both sides. This bombardment discarded the advantage of sur-

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prise, and so churned up the ground that the attackers could not afterwards cross it. The greatest success under this system, a model attack, had been Plumer's at Messines Ridge. There, with everything as favourable as could be, it had cost, in the first forty-eight hours, sixteen thousand men to effect a maximum penetration of four thousand, five hundred yards. At Cambrai, where four hundred tanks led the attack, the casualties in the first forty-eight hours were nine thousand, five hundred, and the penetration nine thousand yards. . . .

And yet nothing had come of the achievement. The reserves of men and tanks that should have consolidated their success were all, says Mr. Lloyd George, floundering in the mud of Passchendaele. There was also this failure among the men which Smuts was called upon to investigate. The success of November 20th ended as the disaster of November 30th.

For this disaster Haig took responsibility. ‘I feel after careful consideration’, he wrote, ‘that all blame for the mishap must rest on my shoulders. It was I who decided on the 22nd that the Bourlon position should be attacked and occupied, in the belief that the enemy's forces in the defensive sector lying to the North West as far as the Sensée River would find their communications cut and so be forced to withdraw. The occupation of this position at once increased our front and threw extra work on our troops. As events on the 30th show, many of the men were tired and unable to resist the enemy's blow, as I believe they could have done had they been fresher.’

Smuts did not find that blame attached to Haig, or that the general disposition of troops was unsound. What happened, he said, was that the enemy poured into ravines which led behind the lines and that as soon as the British found the enemy behind as well as before they surrendered

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or retired without resistance, two machine gunners with them.

Why? The attack was not unexpected, the army command not at fault. There was no evidence that the officers failed. The trouble, he concluded, was that about two months before the division had lost seven thousand officers and men and the fresh drafts filling their places were insufficiently trained to meet the situation that arose when the Germans fell upon them behind and before on November 30th. He added that at Rapallo the King of Italy had similarly explained the rout of Caporetto (thirty thousand officers lost since the beginning of the war and new ones unable to handle their men). . . .

Balfour had agreed with Robertson about making ready to the fullest and with Wilson and French about waiting till the Americans arrived. Who knew, he had asked, what might not happen in the meantime? There were other hopes than those dependent on men and guns. There were anti-war forces, more in favour of the Allies than the enemy, which some day soon must find release; the forces of misery, starvation, universal bankruptcy were coming to play their part in the drama. . . .

Many noble and sorrowing Englishmen thought it might be better not to win the war (though they would not consider losing it) than to win it through such allies as the forces of misery, starvation and universal bankruptcy. . . .

Already in the summer Lord Loreburn, lately Lord Chancellor, had written to Smuts: 'What you say about the spirit of forgiveness when this war is ended is, I am sure, true. Not one in a thousand of those who suffer from it was ever responsible for it, and the horrors it has brought are due partly to fear, partly to the wickedness of comparatively few men. . . .

'We are all being turned toward unknown depths, and

we must stand together in order to save what makes life worth living. My fear is that the world will be ruined and the future of the race itself most grievously impaired by the thought of victory and vengeance in a degree that cannot be attained without almost universal anarchy and revolution, though no punishment can be excessive for the military masters of Germany.’

After the devastation of the autumn he wrote about conditions in England: the difficulties of getting men, ships and food; the serious state of feeling, the loss of morale. These things were as bad, he said, in Ireland. They must be as bad, he added, in Germany and Austria. Soon throughout Europe there would be famine with its attendant diseases. He thought the German Government might want peace, not for reasons of justice, humanity, nor even for fear of military disaster, but because of internal trouble—revolution. The war could not go on much longer without irrevocable ruin to Europe. ‘It is not money or property I am thinking about, but a replacement of salutary customs and hitherto accepted axioms of moral and social principle by a wholesale revulsion which will take generations to work itself out, and on a scale so huge that no nation can escape its contagion. . . . While everyone is challenging everyone else and each side is isolated from communication with the other, the young men are dying in battle. I entreat you to consider whether it is not right that we should informally learn from our principal enemies what their real meaning is. I also beg of you to consider whether there is really any visible prospect of our attaining all the results, including a crushing military victory, which have been announced as the things we are fighting for. If you are satisfied all this is possible, well and good so far as the objects themselves are concerned. If it is not possible even at the frightful price we should have to pay, I am sure you could not entertain that

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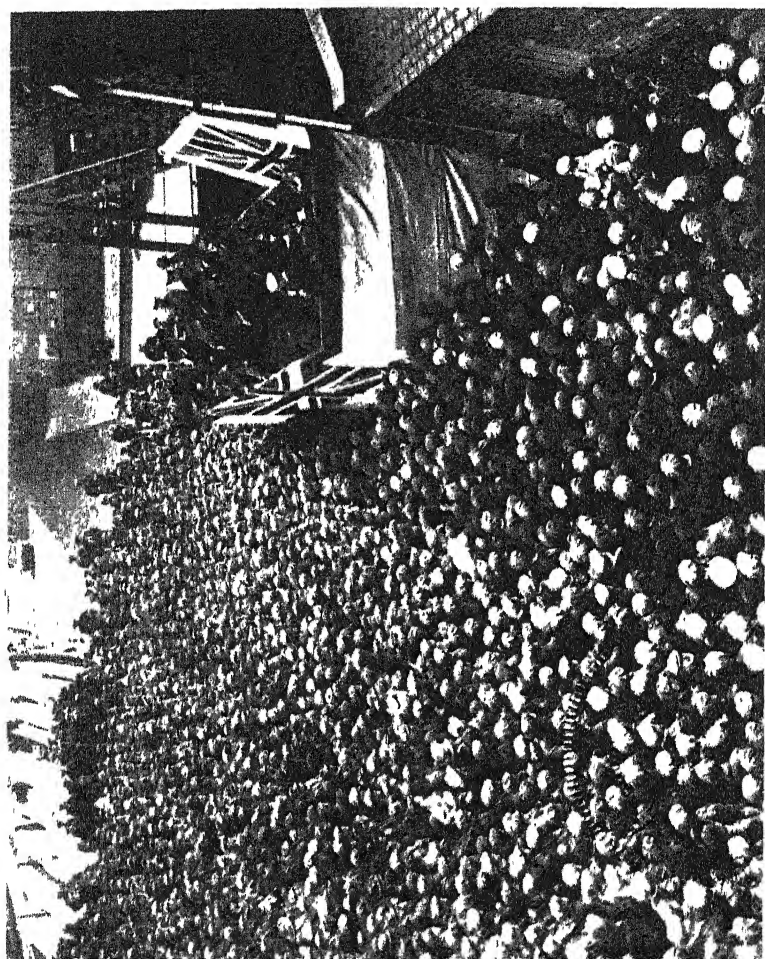
our men are set to fight for an impossibility. You know the prediction of General Haig and what came of it. . . .’

He wrote these things to Smuts in January of 1918. Did he mean by principal enemies only Germany? Did he know that an attempt had already been made to learn informally at least Austria’s real meaning? It had been a very secret mission. His letter was probably written in support of Lord Lansdowne’s famous letter of two months back which *The Times* had refused to publish, and which had then appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*. His reference to Germany’s desire for peace bore on a peace offer recently made by Germany, concerning which it was Robertson’s view that Germany wished to take advantage of the Russian situation, and that no humanitarian motives would have prompted her to this peace offer, but only the knowledge that victory was impossible. The reply, said Robertson, to such a letter (apart from a reassurance to the German people that England’s quarrel was not against them, but against the junkers)—the sound procedure was intensified—arming.

To Lansdowne’s peace-by-arming letter in the *Daily Telegraph* the reply (given by Mr. Lloyd George) was that the exponent of such a doctrine was a public danger and that there was ‘no halfway house between defeat and victory’.

Lansdowne’s letter, published without reference to the government, at a time when Mr. Lloyd George was passionately demanding more men, more men, and finding it hard to get them, ruined him politically. But he went on preaching his doctrine, and eight months later, when the Allies were on the way to victory, he was preaching it still, and he then quoted in support a speech by Smuts.

The speech Lansdowne quoted was the one made at Glasgow (‘my sixth to-day’) in May of 1918. In this speech



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Smuts said: ‘I am persuaded this war will end in decisive results one way or the other and not merely in a stalemate. But when you talk about victory—victory is a vague term—you must know what you mean. There are people who mean by an Allied victory that we must smash Germany, that we must march to Berlin, occupy the capital of the enemy and dictate terms there. . . . I don’t think an out-and-out victory is possible for any group of nations in this war because it will mean an interminable campaign. It will mean that decimated nations will be called upon to wage war for many years to come and what would the results be? . . . The results may be that the civilisation we are out to save may be jeopardised itself. . . . But if you are not going to fight the war to a smash up, then surely it is necessary sometimes informally to find out how things are going, and what your opponent is thinking and what advantage you may take of the situation as it is looked at by him.’

The words used by Lansdowne in his quotation differ a little from those given here because Smuts bases his speeches on a few bare notes, and so newspaper reports are the only authority for them and these have their natural variations. The differences, however, are unimportant: the two versions seem equally to have something in common with Lansdowne’s sentiments. There is no denying too that about this time Smuts was beginning to find the war more than he could bear and that victory (though in the end it was bound to come) seemed to him little better than defeat.

He himself feels that Lansdowne’s letter, appearing at a time when things were breaking everywhere, had the effect of a loser’s pleading, but that his own speech postulated the reasonable victor unwilling to see humanity destroyed for the sake of mere triumph.

It is true the Allies hadn’t yet, by May 1918, the success to support such an attitude. ‘But, at least, victory’, says Smuts,

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‘was our goal. Only what sort of victory? Lloyd George wanted a knock-out blow. I felt that if a decent peace could be achieved—something short, as I said, of marching to Berlin, not something short of retreating to Paris—it would be wrong to sacrifice the human lives and the world’s future chances for a knock-out blow. Some of our best soldiers were convinced that if we fought on to 1919, such exhaustion might result as to make recovery impossible. What was there in winning the war if we ruined ourselves? I am not a believer in barren revenge. We might not even get to that knock-out blow. By God’s mercy the Germans broke down internally. As I said in my first month in England, other forces were fighting for us than men and machines. What finished Germany was mutiny in the fleet and at home—the revolution of the people. It was on account of the mutiny and the revolution that the Kaiser fled. The army stood firm and fought a magnificent rearguard action back to the Rhine. The Germans never failed as a war machine.

‘My line was right. Everything shows it to-day. I was for a peace that would give the world a chance. Not absolute victors and absolute defeated. We are ruined to-day because the world is divided into victors and defeated.

‘I take this to be a different attitude from Lansdowne’s, though I realised, even at the time, that comparisons might be made. . . .’

There remains what Smuts said about informally finding out an opponent’s position and thoughts. This, as it happens, had a meaning so far from the making of advances to Germany that, on the contrary, it referred to the criticisms of Smuts’ negotiations for a separate peace with Austria.

## Chapter XIII

### SMUTS NEGOTIATES WITH AUSTRIA

#### I

By forces other than men and machines Smuts meant those forces he had described on his return from the Western Front in April of 1917: the forces of public opinion outraged by German ruthlessness, 'the dark forces of revolution already gathering in the background; the gaunt spectre of want or even starvation already stalking through the land; all those consequential factors of morale to which even Napoleon attached more military importance than to the powers of his armies'.

In July one of the favourable factors in the Allies' position had seemed to be the internal weakness of Austria: food shortage, war weariness, workers' complaints, military dissension. Further, the new Emperor Karl's wife was a Bourbon, and her influence was towards peace. From the day of his accession there was talk of Karl's longing for peace. Secret service agents, travellers from Spain and Holland, Russians and Albanians, brought news of Austria's longing for a separate peace. Crowned neutrals passed on messages that Austria was ready to break away from Germany. There was particular activity in Scandinavia.

Smuts was spending his last month in German East Africa, with nothing to tell him that he was destined soon to become a man, not only for Africa, but for the world, when there began to arrive messages in England concerning a

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possible meeting—somewhere vaguely in Scandinavia—between representatives from Britain and Austria. The chief purveyor of these messages was an Austrian magnate who offered to meet a British envoy in Copenhagen. He was informed that Britain would be prepared to parley, but only with an Austrian of indisputable authority. After a while the Austrian magnate offered Count von Mensdorff.

### 2

Count von Mensdorff seemed the ideal person for such negotiations. He was distantly connected by marriage with Queen Victoria; had been the last Austrian ambassador in London before the war and popular among the exalted people he knew; had done what he could to avert a break between England and Austria and left his embassy with profound reluctance. Now he was going to Scandinavia on some business or other. It was arranged that he and a British representative should meet in Copenhagen.

They did not meet. The reason, the Austrian magnate explained (saying he himself was now under suspicion and could do no more), was that Germany had got wind of the plot.

Then hints began to come from Mensdorff himself. He saw the King of Norway who described him as 'triste, very worried and much fatter', and he spoke to the King about persuading not only Austria, but Germany, to make peace. He said he had certain proposals to put forward and, to that end, he still wished to meet a British representative.

There were British statesmen who doubted whether Austria was in the position to make a separate peace. The country was economically subservient to Germany. There were ten million German Austrians who would not agree to a separate peace. There were ten million Hungarians who would only agree if, as one of the results, Hungary were

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separated from Austria. German divisions had been drafted into Austrian armies until now German commanders had control of these armies. There was the question of Trieste. The Austrians had no objection to France's having Alsace-Lorraine, but they did not want Italy to have Trieste.

In these circumstances how, the doubters asked, could one assume that the Austrian peace moves were other than a German trap—part of what Ludendorff called their 'peace offensive?'

Yet now, from another source—an even higher source—the highest possible—came overtures, concerning which there could be no doubt at all.

Zita, the new Empress of Austria, had a brother, Prince Sixte of Bourbon, who was serving in the Belgian army. Her mother was living with her in Vienna. Her mother acted as a link between the Emperor and Prince Sixte, and Prince Sixte acted as a link between the Emperor and the Allies.

The Emperor's first suggestions for peace were: a secret armistice with Russia (the matter of Constantinople shelved); the restoration of Belgium and Alsace-Lorraine; a southern Slav monarchy.

There was no mention of Italy, and as it was clear neither Germany nor Italy would agree to these terms, and as any terms that would satisfy the Allies would not satisfy Germany, two fresh documents were now prepared: one for overt negotiations and one for secret negotiations.

The open document began by saying that the Alliance between Austria-Hungary, Germany, Turkey and Bulgaria was absolutely indissoluble and the conclusion of a separate peace by any of these States permanently barred, and its general tone was one of wide-eyed innocence. Austria-Hungary had never contemplated the destruction of Serbia; if Germany wanted to relinquish Alsace-Lorraine, Austria-

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Hungary would naturally not object. *All* the belligerents should restore and compensate Belgium. It was quite wrong to suppose that Austria-Hungary was subordinated to Germany, but was not France influenced by England? Austria-Hungary had no idea of annihilating Roumania, was fighting in self-defence, and made no racial differentiations. . . .

The secret document added to the open document the following information:

Concerning Alsace-Lorraine: 'We will support France, and bring pressure to bear on Germany with all our means.'

Concerning Belgium: 'We have the greatest sympathy for Belgium, and know that she has been unjustly treated.'

Prince Sixte and the French secretly met, Prince Sixte and his brother in law secretly met, the Prime Ministers of England, France and Italy secretly met, the Kings of England and Italy secretly met, an interallied conference secretly met, people secretly met for nine months. The Austrians offered to go on secretly meeting and it finally emerged that Austria was not prepared, without compensation, to give France what she wanted; and France was not prepared to see an Italy (given what she wanted) go out of the war; and 'there can be no secret diplomacy', said the French Prime Minister with virtuous hauteur, and so these negotiations ended.

Other peace offers came besides the five received this year by Austria alone. In August the Vatican made a peace move which the Allies considered pro-German and concerning which it was Ludendorff's idea that 'we must get everything we possibly can that is justified by our position'. In September von Kühlmann, the Foreign Minister, made a peace move through Spain which ended when, in reply to the question concerning Alsace-Lorraine, Kühlmann gave the simple answer: 'No, never.' "There were peace moves

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from Bulgaria and Turkey. None seemed to the English significant except those from Austria.

The end of 1917 approached with the Entente in a worse position even than when Smuts had landed in England in the middle of March. What they had to show of good fortune for the year was significant: conquest of the Turk and of peril from the air and under the sea—the last the work chiefly of the tireless British navy, but due also to a two hundred and fifty mile barrage between Scotland and Norway towards which America contributed. In March, however, the Allies had had half as many men again as the Central Empires. Now Russia was gone—she had signed on December 5th that armistice at Brest-Litovsk whose conclusion was a treaty far worse for the loser than the Versailles Treaty. America was barely beginning to replace Russia. There were the year's millions of losses. The strength of the Allies was at the moment less than that of the Central Empires.

Smuts had said, in July, that until Italy abated her claims on Austrian territory there was little chance of a separate peace with Austria, and that to attempt it was a dangerous game. In December, however, a meeting was arranged to take place in Switzerland between Mensdorff and a British delegate, and the British delegate chosen was Smuts.

### 3

According to the German Ambassador in Vienna (Herr von Wedel) the instructions Mensdorff had from Czernin were to enquire at the outset if peace was possible for Germany as well as Austria, and Smuts said he was not discussing the matter of a peace with Germany. Mensdorff then asked him whether it was still believed by Great Britain that the German army could be beaten, and Smuts answered: 'No, we do not believe that we can beat Germany in a mili-

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tary sense, but the moment for discussion with Germany has not yet come.'

According to Colonel Repington, Briand said about Smuts' visit to Switzerland that he asked for a 'yes' or 'no' to a string of questions, and, not getting the answer he wanted, gave a military salute and went home.

This is the story (too vague) Smuts tells himself:

'Overtures had been made to the British Government from the highest sources in Europe to the effect that Austria wanted to go out of the war, and asked only for an opportunity to come into touch with the British Government and receive certain assurances. If these assurances were given then she would go out of the war.

'We doubted it. I myself particularly doubted it. We were fairly certain that Austria was no longer a free agent and *could* not go out of the war. However, it would have been wrong not to investigate the situation as far as possible, and so it was arranged that I should meet von Mensdorff at Geneva.

'Our meeting was very secret. It had to be. Although there was the possibility that the Germans knew all about our dealings with Austria we ourselves could not point blank announce that we were trying to lure Germany's ally from her. No one knew of it except the War Cabinet, and the French and Italian Prime Ministers whom we had consulted beforehand and who had given their approval. I travelled incognito. Philip Kerr came with me.

'I spent two days with von Mensdorff. The mission was afterwards held to be a failure. But it was neither a failure nor not a failure. The object was not to make peace, but to find out if there was an opportunity to make peace. Von Mensdorff and I went over the same old ground, and the longer I stayed the clearer I became that von Mensdorff might want to know if I had anything to say to him, but he



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had nothing to say to me. He never made those proposals he had spoken of in his messages. He was not in a position to negotiate at all. Austria was absolutely held by Germany.

‘So I came back and repeated to the Prime Minister I was satisfied no loophole existed for a peace with Austria. That was what we wanted to know; that was what I had gone to find out—whether such a loophole existed; there the whole business ended—except, of course, for the revelations and criticisms.’

### 4

The revelations (from a Tory source) were that certain English Catholics, thinking Catholic Austria-Hungary might wish to be saved apart from Germany, offered this idea to various responsible statesmen, who rejected it. There was, however, in the Cabinet an important member who had never had leisure to study foreign affairs; and he, ignoring the fact that Austria was at the moment invading Italy, and despite Italy’s vehement protests, advocated informal talks with Austria. The Cabinet thought a Colonial might be let off more lightly than an Englishman when the expedition, foredoomed to failure, came to be revealed, and so Smuts was sent to meet ‘von Kühlmann’s Austrian confederate. . . .’

From a Socialist source the revelations were that ‘a member of the War Cabinet, General Smuts, a lawyer by profession, without any authority or mandate from the people of this country to represent them, was sent to Switzerland to carry on negotiations for a separate peace with Austria-Hungary.

‘It was perfectly well known that a separate peace of that kind with Austria-Hungary was impossible. Austria-Hungary was grappled to Germany by hooks of steel and hooks of gold. . . . General Smuts was sent to Switzerland to meet

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Count von Mensdorff, and the government of the country has been placed in the position that, whereas we knew nothing about what was going on . . . every word of the discussion between General Smuts and Count Mensdorff was sent day by day to Berlin and strengthened the hands of Count Hertling in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. . . . General Smuts failed. . . . The government tried again, and again sent General Smuts to meet Count Mensdorff, who, although not an able man, was trained in diplomacy, which General Smuts was not.

‘For the War Cabinet and the Foreign Office to act in this manner without any reference to the British people and without any communications whatever to the House of Commons was direct treachery not only to Great Britain, but to the democracies of Europe. . . .’

Similar revelations came from other quarters. A point all the critics made was the wickedness of sending a simple Boer, an innocent child from the backveld, to be duped by an experienced diplomat. . . .

It was in response to the criticisms concerning his Austrian venture that Smuts used the words to support his own peace negotiation arguments: ‘If you are not going to fight the war to a smash up, then surely it is necessary sometimes to find out how things are going and what your opponent is thinking and what advantage you may take of the situation as it is looked at by him. . . .’

‘I remember’, Smuts added to these words, ‘a very wise thing said to me many years ago by President Kruger when I was his Attorney General. In those days I was very young and inclined, of course, to be aggressive. He said to me one day: “That is not the way to deal with your opponent. The way to deal with him is to smack him hard on one cheek and rub him gently on the other.”’

One might imagine that such a procedure would be even

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more annoying to the person with the cheeks than to be fairly smacked on both sides. However, the name by which Smuts has been known in South Africa throughout his career is 'slim'—that is to say, crafty—'Jannie'.

And how the subtleties of diplomacy seem childlike in later years, and how clearly big deals are only swollen small deals—hardly to be differentiated one from the other, when a man thinks, like Smuts, in worlds and millenniums.

It is this sense of a universal perspective which makes Smuts, coming from his far end of Africa, so easy in what are called great affairs.

## Chapter XIV

### THE FOURTEEN POINTS

#### I

It would be an understatement to say that in January, 1918, Woodrow Wilson was the most important man in the world. All the world looked to him. Even his enemies looked to him. In 1916, he won his election with the words: 'He kept us out of the war.' In 1917, he brought America into the war with the words: 'The world must be made safe for democracy.' When, on January 8th of next year, he enunciated his Fourteen Points, Clemenceau said: 'God gave us His Ten Commandments, and we broke them. Wilson gave us his Fourteen Points—we shall see'; but humanity at large had less heart for ribaldry. The Fourteen Points came to the world as a revelation of hope. Even Germany reserved them—*reserved* them—as a final way out.

Eight of the Fourteen Points dealt with the rights of particular territories damaged or wrongly held by the Central Empires. These were to be evacuated, freed and restored; or their frontiers readjusted, autonomy and independence recognised, according to principles of history and nationhood. Restitution was to be made not only to such allied countries as Russia, Belgium, France, Italy, Roumania, Serbia and Montenegro, but also to Poland, and even to the peoples (not the countries) of Austria-Hungary and Turkey. Another point dealt with colonial claims in general: the simultaneous satisfaction of governed and governing.

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Five points laid down general principles:

(1) Open covenants of peace openly arrived at.  
(2) Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas outside territorial waters alike in peace and war. . . .

(3) The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers.

(4) Adequate guarantees that national armaments would be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

(14) A general association of nations under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

The Fourteen Points were further explained or elaborated in three speeches made by Wilson on February 11th, July 4th and September 27th, 1918. These laid down what he called Principles, Ends and Particulars. There were four Principles: essential justice in individual cases; peoples and provinces not to be bartered like chattels or pawns; territorial settlements for the good of the populations and not the satisfaction of rival states; no openings to be made for future discord.

There were four Ends: disruptive powers to be eliminated; settlements to be satisfactory to the peoples themselves; nations to comport themselves according to the honourable standards of individuals; an organisation to enforce peace and justice.

There were five Particulars: impartial justice according to right and not desire; settlements based on common and not special interests; no leagues within the League; no selfish economic combinations within the League; open agreements and treaties.

It will be seen that some of these points, principles, ends and particulars were merely exhortations and that others

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overlapped one another. Few survived entire the peace negotiations.

Wilson's Points (fourteen or eighteen or twenty-two or twenty-seven) did not, in short, bring about the millennium. Nor yet have the Lord's.

### 2

These, then, were the terms Germany reserved as a final hope. She accepted them three-quarters of a year later. She agreed to them when she had no other hope and when she had finally made it impossible for the world to encompass any hope at all. Her immediate reply was to fall upon her opponents with the most terrible onslaught known in history.

On March 21st, in a heavy mist, the German army on the Western Front, enlarged by troops no longer needed in Russia, without warning bombardment, fell upon Gough's Fifth Army and overwhelmed it.

There had been disunion between British and French before the event. For a year the French had wanted the British to hold a longer line. Then they had wanted to draw too heavily on what was considered to be a common stock of reserves. Haig, expecting the next blow to fall on the British army (rightly, as it happened), had refused to yield the reserves, but he had succumbed to the longer line. And it was this forty-seven mile line, too thinly held by exhausted men, that broke before the Germans on March 21st.

The attack was stemmed two days later and diverted towards Amiens. By March 27th, the Germans had advanced forty miles and cut a railway to Paris and presently they were within sight of Amiens. . . .

### 3

Smuts had been sent to the Western Front in January to inspect the British line and consult with the army comman-

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ders about their needs. The report he made was that the British line, if heavily assailed, would fail to resist attack at two particular points. At these two particular points they did, in March and April, fail to resist attack. And now, after the event, Smuts had to report on the disaster.

The men, he said in his report, had come to the trenches worn out after a summer and autumn of 'the most ceaseless, bloody and muddy fighting in this whole war'. They had reached the end of 1917 'tired, decimated in numbers, with their morale impaired, and the situation for us very very serious indeed. . . . In this tired and disheartened condition they were set to dig trenches and to put up wire entanglements. It was asking too much of human nature. . . .'

The British forces were greatly outnumbered. There was that thick mist. The defences taken over from the French were ruins: they had to be remade and new ones made too by exhausted men.

Yet the struggle had to be continued. Now boys of eighteen and a half were sent into the firing line; there was further combing out of industries; British troops were withdrawn from Salonika and replaced by Indians; Americans came; shipping was reorganised to provide the necessary transport across the Atlantic and the Channel. The government had long urged unity of command, but military and political opposition had delayed it. Now, at last, Foch was appointed General-in-Chief of the Allies' armies on the Western Front, and, with a unified command, the war took on another aspect.

### 4

Not, says Smuts to-day, that British generals hadn't individually been willing to act under French command and French generals under British command. But the incompatibility was too great, and only trouble had resulted. A so-

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lution had been found in Foch. 'Remember,' says Smuts, 'Foch was our choice. It was our decision that settled the matter. He had been in retirement when, owing to British initiative, he was put on the inter-allied War Council. We stood out for Foch against both the French Government and the French General Staff. When Milner, at the instance of Haig, proposed him for the Supreme Command, it was entirely against Clemenceau's own will, and because of our insistence, that Clemenceau agreed. It happened that Foch was a Frenchman, but yet he was the *British* choice.'

It was on March 26th that Milner went to Paris and the British finally linked their armies for all purposes with the armies of the French. On April 14th, Foch became, in title and authority, Commander-in-Chief of the British and French armies, and, within the next two weeks, also of the Belgian, American and Italian armies.

The March offensive of March 21st continued to the end of the month. There were other offensives in April, May, June, July, August. The British alone lost a quarter of a million men. The Germans lost half a million men. Men by the hundred thousand (men no longer, even to themselves) were destroyed. More corps, more divisions, renewed armies, came along—not men: effectives. The British themselves threw seven hundred thousand men into the line.

When the Germans launched their attack on July 15th, they expected (said their Chancellor, von Hertling) to be in Paris by the end of the month. The attack failed. On July 18th the Allies made their first counter-attack and Hertling wrote: 'Even the most optimistic among us understood that all was lost.'

Ludendorff himself admitted it three weeks later. On August 8th, an attack of Australians and Canadians, led by four hundred and fifty tanks, supported by French and British, 'put the decline of our fighting forces' (he wrote) 'be-



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yond doubt. August 8th was the black day of the German army in the history of the war. . . .’

The Emperor sat for six days in a tower in a wood watching through a telescope the distant blur of his losing armies. ‘The Emperor told me later’, said Ludendorff, ‘that after the failure of the July offensive and after August 8th, he knew the war could no longer be won. . . .’

Ludendorff himself said now that ‘the war must be ended’.

It began to seem to Foch that the war might be ended.

Although Foch was still making preparations for another year of war, he was at least ready to seek a conclusion in 1918. The French were of good heart again.

Only two months ago Smuts had had to warn the Imperial War Cabinet (meeting after a year’s adjournment) that there was another danger besides danger from Germany. ‘In this country . . .’ he had said, ‘the temper of the people has improved enormously. I remember what the British temper was in the summer of last year: the doubt, the vacillation, the hesitation, the differences of opinion that existed then. All that (said Smuts in June, 1918) has disappeared. You may go to any part of this country, and you will find that the temper of the people has hardened and is now as firm as it could be, and I am sure that the harder the blows struck by the enemy, the more resolute and the more determined this people will be to see the business through.

‘It is an undefeated people; for better or worse, they have never been defeated and they do not know defeat. The nation has that spirit that the greater the danger, the more they are determined not to give in. The Americans will have the same temper, and they will show perhaps even a greater spirit in the struggles that are coming. But it is not the same with the French, and that is the other danger which we have before us. . . . The French so far have been superb.

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There is no doubt about that. They have suffered beyond belief. They have suffered enormous casualties. Their country has been devastated. The best parts are in possession of the enemy. Yet in all that suffering and in all that loss they have shown a spirit for which no one can possibly give them too much credit. In this spirit they are bearing up. But whether they will maintain it when the enemy's guns are in full range of Paris we do not know. . . .'

Foch's victories of July and August had revived them. Their pride was now returned: they would not lose the war and become a third-class nation. The Italians too were revived: their dream was revived of becoming a Mediterranean power. For this they had come into the war, and on this they were again determined.

The British were set in bitterness to save civilisation.

### 5

When the Imperial War Cabinet met in June, 1918, the fortunes of the Allies were—seemed—at their lowest. Since the German-Russian armistice a million Germans had been released for service on the Western Front; they had the Russians' stores, guns and munitions—such stores, guns and munitions as were left of the Russians' miserable equipment. To put against this million of new Germans there had been the dream of America—through the bitterest days, a dream. In spite of a campaign of preparedness that had begun a year before America's entry into the war (and a great bannered march through New York City of an eighth of a million people in May, 1916) Americans were still unprepared. For where they had promised, by the spring of 1918, seventeen divisions, each twice as great as a British or German division; where one had hoped for perhaps ten or twelve of these seventeen divisions; actually, by the terrible days of March, there was one single American division in

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the fighting line, and three preparing. Where a thousand aeroplanes a month had been offered and artillery enough for the Americans themselves, practically no aeroplanes had come even by the summer. Also the guns: the Americans were using the British and French guns which they had originally declared would not suit them.

Over a year was passed since America's entry into the war. All that year, indeed, Woodrow Wilson had dreamt that the mere moral compulsion of America's entry into the war might induce the Germans to make peace; he had thought to make peace with words; he had sent, instead of his seventeen divisions, his Fourteen Points. It was not until Germany had replied to those Fourteen Points with her March offensive that Wilson could bring himself to acknowledge the strength of unreason in the world, and the necessity not for moral argument but for force. Then, on Mr. Lloyd George's despairing appeal to Wilson for a hundred and twenty thousand men a month, the Americans did come in to save the war and the world. Now, during the last two months, they had bettered their promise and sent a hundred and thirty thousand men a month, and a larger monthly number were due within the next nine months; seven American divisions were in the line—all fighting well—all needing to fight well, and the British too, if the Allies were not to be destroyed in France and the war transferred from the Continent to the seas, and Japan called in there to help as an equal partner.

The British leaders saw the war as wholly dependent on what the British and Americans alone could do. They considered measures for 1919 and 1920. A month after Hertling's confession that 'all was lost', a week after Ludendorff's decision that 'the war must be ended', five weeks before the fall of Bulgaria, six weeks before the Germans appealed to President Wilson 'to take a hand in the restoration of peace'

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on the basis of his Fourteen (and additional) Points, Smuts and his colleagues were considering whether the war could be ended in 1919 or in 1920.

They resolved to conserve resources for a supreme effort in the summer of 1919. That is, the General Staff (always more optimistic than the War Cabinet) resolved it. The War Committee doubted whether a decision in 1919 ought even to be sought unless the Eastern Front were recreated—unless Italy could attack Austria and an effective check be placed on Bulgaria and Turkey. For if by 1919, they said, the Allies could significantly develop tanks, poison gas and aircraft, so could the Germans. The Germans were also (as the Flanders campaign of 1917 had proved) masters of defence. Only the Americans, among the Allies, could survive an offensive campaign in 1919. The Americans had barely touched their resources in man power. The British and French had gone to their limits. On top of everything, had any offensive yet succeeded on the Western Front? Could any offensive succeed on the Western Front?

By December 31st, 1919, if the Americans came forward in their due numbers, the Allies might have a superiority over the Central Empires of six or seven hundred thousand men. They might—but the War Committee doubted it. Their final idea, generally speaking, was that it would be better to await the chances of 1920 than fail in an attempt to seek a decision on the Western Front in 1919.

Smuts himself had other ideas.

## Chapter XV

### WAR TILL 1920

#### I

**I**t is Smuts' impression that he was strong in hope throughout the war, and that the first and only time in his existence he knew despair was in Paris in 1919. Then, he says, he saw there was a crack in life which also went through him.

His impression is not correct. He was in despair after the Boer War, and the despair that he thinks came over him during the peace negotiations began actually about the time the Germans knew themselves defeated when he faced the fact that, whatever result the war might bring, humanity itself confronted defeat.

Now while, strengthened by Foch's successes, other Ministers put forward their conditions for a peace to be achieved in 1919 or even 1920, Smuts persisted in the attitude he had, three months before, expressed in these words: 'I don't think an out-and-out victory is possible, for any group of nations in this war, because it will mean an interminable campaign. It will mean that decimated nations will be called upon to wage war for many months to come, and what would the results be? . . . The results may be that the civilisation we are out to save may be jeopardised itself.'

He refused to be comforted by Foch's achievements or the coming of the Americans. He saw dangers in every direction that seemed to outbalance the hopes of the day.

'How,' he asked, 'as sane, wise, sober men, can we look forward to the development of the war situation for the balance of this year and next year and thereafter? I assume that nothing material is going to happen for the rest of this year. . . . What military situation can we look forward to in 1919? . . . If there is no decision in 1919 what are we to look forward to? Must we look forward to 1920? I am very loth to look forward to 1920. There is no doubt that, by prolonging the war indefinitely, Germany will lose, but the question arises: is it worth while to us? . . . It may well be that, by the indefinite continuance of the war, we shall become a second- or third-class Power, and the leadership, not only financially and militarily, but in every respect, will have passed on to America and Japan. Europe will have fought itself out to a finish, and she will have been utterly smashed, and not even the roots of future progress will be left to us. . . . When we look at questions such as we are considering here, we have to think very carefully how we are going to be affected by them—whether, in the attempt to prolong the war and smash Germany, we may find that we have achieved our object, but at the cost of our life and the life of the Empire, and Germany is indeed broken but we are broken too, and we have sunk to a second- or a third-class Power. I am very much against fighting to the absolute end because I think that although that end will be fatal to the enemy it may possibly be fatal for us too. . . .

'I would say this: that, as soon as the military tide has really turned—and it is turning now—as soon as it has really turned and it is clear to us that the enemy is going under, and the enemy does come to us, as I am sure he will come, and is prepared to consider those terms which we think essential, then we should be prepared to make peace, and not fight it out to the absolute end which may be disastrous to us too . . . even though the German armies may

not have been smashed to the extent some people would like, and although we may not have reached that complete military predominance we have considered desirable. . . .’

2

‘Of course’, says Smuts to-day, ‘I was wrong in my belief that ‘nothing material was going to happen for the rest of the year. I simply didn’t know the facts. None of us knew. What reason had we, on the face of it, to hope for outright victory in the near future? Foch’s successes might be very significant or they might not. The German offensive was continuing. The German army never did get utterly beaten—it was the German people. And though the German people were even then breaking down, and one expected that sooner or later they must break down, no information of ours suggested that the end was already upon them.

‘The sum of it is that, on the facts we had, I was for a moderate and reasonable peace as soon as a fair opportunity presented itself, and the others were for a fight to a smash-up.’

They argued with him. Surely, they protested, the situation was improved both East and West; the German people, if not the German army, must soon yield; it was more serious to end the war with a Germany unexhausted than with a Japan or an America unexhausted. Germany had to be beaten. Germany would be beaten—if not in 1919 (no one spoke of 1918) then in 1920. A defeat had to be inflicted on Germany that she would recognise as a defeat—and as a punishment and the mede of her offence and the judgment of humanity and a lesson to the world for ever.

Smuts had said of the English two months before: ‘It is an undefeated people.’ So strong were they in their purpose of fighting to the end that when the end eventually

came—peace—the eleventh of November—they could not believe it to be the end; they could hardly turn from thoughts of war to thoughts of peace; they were ready for further war but not for peace. Peace found the English as unprepared as four years ago the war had found them. . . .

3

Yet now, suddenly, in the midst of more and still more preparations for a conflict to last another year or even another two years—as if at the order of a universal ballet master—all theatres one theatre—soldiers come out from the wings of Salonika and gyrate towards Bulgaria, and Bulgarians put down their weapons and a Bulgarian flag officer makes the proper antics with a flag of truce and the people rise and the king departs and the Bulgarians go from the stage.

And the stage remains set for the march of the Italians from their sanctuary of the Piave, and the Austrians make their death leap while a chorus of Hungarians in the background wave red flags and chant: 'Long live Karolyi! Long live the Revolution! Long live the Republic!' even until the epilogue is reached of four elderly men sitting round a table in Paris. But meantime, after the Italians and Austrians come soldiers from the East: a motley of men, yellow and white, pursuing a remnant of flying Turks.

The climax shows the Western Front: German soldiers clamouring for further battle, German sailors refusing further battle, German people crying revolution, an Emperor with his retinue running. . . .

To the accompaniment of distant Peace Notes.

The Curtain Falls.



## Chapter XVI

### THE NATIONS IN JUDGMENT

#### I

There is a belief that Woodrow Wilson came to Versailles full of a universal benevolence that was corrupted by the diplomacy of Europe. The facts of the peace negotiations do not support the theory of this corruption. His speeches before he arrived do not convey an indiscriminate sweetness.

The first of the Central Empires was fallen—Bulgaria had already asked for the armistice which a few days later was signed—when, on September 27th, Woodrow Wilson, in adding his five Particulars to his Fourteen Points, his four Principles and his four Ends, spoke these words:

‘We are all agreed that there can be no peace obtained by any kind of bargain or compromise with the Governments of the Central Empires, because we have dealt with them already, and have seen them deal with other governments that were parties to this struggle, at Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest. They have convinced me that they are without honour and do not intend justice. They observe no covenants, accept no principle but force and their own interest. We cannot come to terms with them. They have made it impossible. The German people must by this time be fully aware that we cannot accept the word of those who forced the war upon us. We do not think the same thoughts or speak the same language of agreement. . . .’

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He went on:

‘To achieve by the coming settlements a secure and lasting peace it will be necessary that all who sit down at the peace table shall come ready and willing to pay the price, the only price, that will procure it; and ready and willing also to create in some virile fashion the only instrumentality by which it can be made certain that the agreements of the peace shall be honoured and fulfilled. That price is impartial justice in every item of the settlement, no matter whose interest is crossed; and not only impartial, but also the satisfaction of the several peoples whose fortunes are dealt with. That indispensable instrumentality is a League of Nations, formed under covenants that will be efficacious. Without such an instrumentality by which the peace of the world can be guaranteed, peace will rest in part upon the word of outlaws, and only upon that word. For Germany will have to redeem her character, not by what happens at the peace table, but by what follows. . . .’

Germany’s response to the declaration in which these words occurred was made a week later. It took the form of a Note addressed by the Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, to the President of the United States. The Note (whose terms were used also by Austria-Hungary) requested him ‘to take in hand the restoration of peace, acquaint all belligerent states with this request, and invite them to send plenipotentiaries for the purpose of opening negotiations’. It accepted ‘as a basis for peace negotiations’ that programme set forth by Wilson in his message to congress on January 8th, 1918 (the Fourteen Points) ‘and his later pronouncements, especially his speech of September 27th.’

It requested, ‘with a view to avoiding further bloodshed’, ‘the immediate conclusion of an armistice on land and water and in the air’.

Wilson demanded not only agreement to the Fourteen

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Points but the withdrawal of German troops from foreign soil and the assurance of a democratic government in Germany.

His conditions were accepted.

He proceeded in the spirit of his words of September 27th, and also in accordance with the feeling of his associates that, as hostilities would probably not be resumed after an armistice, armistice terms should be 'as near peace terms as possible and very drastic'. They meant as near as possible to terms that might have been dictated from Berlin. So no armistice, said Wilson, could be negotiated which did not secure the present military supremacy of the Allied Powers. Submarine warfare was to be discontinued. Democratic government had to be not merely promised, but installed, in Berlin.

His conditions were accepted.

He undertook to discuss with his associates the grant of an armistice.

### 2

His associates having, without undue eagerness, discussed the matter with his representative, Colonel House, declared their willingness to make peace with the Government of Germany on the terms of peace laid down in the President's address to Congress of January 8th, 1918, and the principles of settlement enunciated in his subsequent addresses. But they made two reservations. 'Clause Two,' they said, 'relating to what is usually described as the Freedom of the Seas, is open to various interpretations, some of which they could not accept. . . .' They set aside Clause Two. There was also the condition in the Fourteen Points, 'that invaded territories must be restored as well as evacuated and freed. The Allied Governments feel that no doubt ought to be allowed to exist as to what this provision implies. By it they understand that compensation will be made by Germany

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for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property by land, by sea, and from the air.'

So now everything was clarified.

Colonel House asked Foch if he were prepared to stop hostilities, and Foch said he was against the sacrifice of an unnecessary life. The Allies' offer (the governing document in future negotiations) was sent to the Germans on November 5th. They accepted its conditions in asking for an armistice. . . .

But what, when it came to the point, did the clarification of the word 'restored'—the clarification itself mean? What was compensation? What was damage? What was the civilian population? What was their property? What was by land, by sea, and from the air?

In every country the lawyers sat exercising their wits over this question, not of law, but of words.

It fell to Smuts to decide the question. . . .

### 3

There was trouble about the signing of an armistice with Turkey. The French wanted the honour. The British said that none but themselves had contributed anything to the Eastern campaigns except 'a few nigger policemen to see that we do not steal the Holy Sepulchre'. One had nerved oneself to the giant bearing of two more years of horror, and now suddenly that horror was gone. The flare-up over this little thing of signatures—all such flarings—were the release of being small and human again—as a child, playing a game of heroes all day, lies trembling in his safe bed at night.

Arguments, recriminations, peacemakers. The French yielded. The Armistice with Turkey bears the name of the British. . . .

On October 26th, Ludendorff was forced to resign. Fol-

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lowing an overdose of a sleeping draught during influenza he slept for thirty-six hours, and when he returned to his world there was added, to the month-old story of Bulgaria gone, the news of the end also of Turkey and Austria. He was prepared to lead his soldiers to battle again. They were prepared to follow him. But now the sailors mutinied and the people rose, and the Chancellor resigned, and a republic came in, and the Kaiser fled, and at five o'clock on the morning of November 11th, in Foch's railway carriage in the Forest of Compiègne, Germany signed an armistice and the world war was over.

The war, says Mr. H. G. Wells, had become 'an atmosphere, a habit of life, a new social order. Then suddenly it was ended.'

Death in war, too, had become a habit of life which was ended. Ended was the terrible consolation that, since no man could suffer more than it was possible for a man to suffer, the limit of the world's suffering was one man's suffering and so it made no difference whether millions suffered or one; departed was that comfort of monotony.

Now, on November 11th, it was seen that not all young men had to die on battlefields. Only ten millions. And those whose men were among the ten millions remembered those whose men would come home, and their bitter jealousy, on the day of peace, was the bitterest thing of all.

4

'Give us a good peace,' said Smuts.

## Chapter XVII

### 'THE HEIR TO THIS GREAT ESTATE'

#### I

And now the habit, the social order, of the war being ended, one had to get back to a life without war. For over a year reports for reconstruction had been coming to the War Cabinet. Nobody had deeply considered them: the calculations were for a war to be continued and not for a war to be ended.

Soon men would return by the million—broken men and men whole at least in body—to a world that had learnt to do without them, and for which they were no longer fit. What was to be done with these men and what with the men—and the women too—who had taken their places? Where was the material for the life of the living to be found? So many people gone and yet too many left. Too many left for a world to maintain which had spent eight thousand pounds ahead to destroy ten million men—a depleted world.

Now, in England, both for humanity's sake and to prevent industrial unrest, the Cabinet authorised the formation of a committee to deal with the problems of demobilisation. And over this committee, during the short time he was still in the Cabinet, Smuts presided. It had been understood from the beginning that he would remain in the Cabinet only until the war was over, and in December he resigned.

He did not resign from the wider obligations of peace.

‘It is not merely’, he said a few days after the Armistice, ‘that thrones and empires are falling, and ancient institutions suddenly collapsing. A world order is visibly passing away before our eyes, and the danger is that things may go too far and a setback be given to Europe from which she does not recover for generations. . . .’

‘What a doom has come over Germany! What a price she has paid for her ambitions and her crimes. . . . This is what we have fought for—that the fate of Prussian militarism may be the most awful and solemn judgment of history. . . .’

‘Now, as we organised the world for victory, let us organise it against hunger and unemployment. Not only the liberated territories of our Allies, not only our small neutral neighbours, but the enemy countries themselves, require our helping hand. Let us extend it in all generosity and magnanimity.’

He spoke of the ‘sheer practical necessity—no longer an ideal or an inspiration’—of a League of Nations.

Through eighteen months of abnormal work he had brooded over this matter of a League of Nations. Many others had brooded over it. Since 1917 a committee under the presidency of Lord Phillimore had been working on a draft plan for a League whose basis was Lord Robert Cecil’s paper of 1916. Smuts felt that no existing schemes went far enough. He had said at his first League meeting: ‘You do not want a body that will merely pass judgment and see that it is carried out, but one that will meet from time to time to revise the situation and liberate those forces of progress which must have an outlet unless there is to be another convulsion. . . .’

Now, unexpectedly, peace was come with talk of con-

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ference and settlements. On December 16th, the day Smuts’ resignation from the War Cabinet was announced, there was published also his own plan for a League of Nations. It took the form of a seventy-one page treatise (a parliamentary paper really) which, as he said, he had ‘hastily’, ‘at the last moment, and amid other pressing duties, put together in view of the early meeting of the Peace Conference’; and its objects were:

To help in the formation of public opinion;

To lift the League from the academic to the practical;

To demonstrate its rightful place as inheritor of ‘the great position rendered vacant by the destruction of so many of the old European empires, and the passing away of the old European order’.

He divided his treatise into three parts: The Position and Powers of the League; The Constitution of the League; The League and World Peace. The last was an extension of what he called ‘the ordinary conception’ of the League as an instrument to be used only ‘in very grave emergencies, when the spectre of war appears.’ War, he said, was ‘a symptom of deep-seated evils . . . a disease or growth out of social and political conditions’. Its remedy was not something to be superimposed upon those bad conditions, but an inner transformation.

An effective League of Nations had to do more than prevent war and punish unauthorised belligerents. It had to be ‘an ever visible working organ of the polity of civilisation . . . whose peace activity was the foundation and guarantee of its war power.’

He defined the scope of such a League.

### 3

To begin with, it had to be a greater League to replace the little Leagues that had formed the empires of the past.



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Of all these little Leagues none remained now, said Smuts, except the British Commonwealth, ‘the only embryo league of nations’ since it was based on the true principle of national freedom and political decentralisation. The others were broken down, and in their place ‘we find the map of Europe dotted with small nations, embryo states, derelict territories’, and Europe ‘reduced to its original atoms.’

He summarised the position in the most significant sentence of his life. ‘Europe’, he said, ‘is being liquidated, and the League of Nations must be the heir to this great estate.’

He must himself have liked the idea, for he used it again and again in his pamphlet. The League, he said, had to be the successor of the great position rendered vacant by the destruction of the old European empires; it had to be the inheritor or reversionary of these defunct empires; it had to be the heir of this great estate. Sometimes, thinking of the word estate, his law-trained mind made a variation. He then called the League the liquidator or trustee of the bankrupt estate.

Yet why, after all, was this fancy of Smuts so *significant*?

It happened to be one of those verbal conceptions that have influenced history. For it did more than please Smuts himself and many people in England—it had the fortune to fascinate also Woodrow Wilson.

## Chapter XVIII

### SMUTS AND WILSON

#### I

Smuts gives his passion to causes. His personal relationships are founded on a sense of duty. He may be sentimental about this duty—from suffering bores provided they have already bored him for a quarter of a century, to carrying about family portraits. But there is one human being of whom he speaks with emotion: Woodrow Wilson; and the reason is that Woodrow Wilson represents to him the greatest cause in the world.

#### 2

He did not have this emotion for Woodrow Wilson at the beginning. He saw him then only as a means to an end. He saw then only the League. He wanted the League to attach America to England: and he wanted his colleagues to believe the League could attach America to England: he wanted, in short, the League.

He said, for instance: 'President Wilson is fighting for a League of Nations. If he can go back from the Peace Conference with this point in his favour—that he has secured the League of Nations as a practical part of a world system, he will go a long way to meet us on particular points and help our programme again, and really our programme is an unselfish one. I would therefore try to get America into

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European politics. It is no use her sitting outside. Let her undertake the burden and feel the responsibility.'

He said again: 'We must from the very start of the conference co-operate with America, and encourage and support President Wilson as far as is consistent with our own interests. . . .

'I suggest that we could best signalise that co-operation by supporting President Wilson's policy of a League of Nations, and indeed by going further and giving form and substance to his rather nebulous ideas. President Wilson has repeatedly and solemnly declared that America wants nothing for herself in this war, that she only desires to serve the great causes and ideals of humanity. In his mind the League of Nations is the root of the whole matter. If he could score a victory there, if he could go back to America with the League of Nations realised—not merely a formula, but a real substantive part of our future international system—I believe he will be satisfied and will be prepared to drop some of the other contentious points he has unfortunately raised. My suggestion is that we should tell him frankly at the beginning that we are going to support him most fully on the League of Nations. . . .

'The extraordinary situation created by the end of this war and the break up, on an unprecedented scale, of the old political system of Europe calls imperatively for the League of Nations as the foundation of the new policy of Europe. . . .

'The League of Nations supplies the key to most of the new troubles . . . and it will bring America to our side in the policies of the future. . . .'

He said these things a fortnight before publishing his own League plan, and when that League plan was already before the Cabinet. Imagine his exhilaration when it began to seem that, of all League plans, Wilson was drawn most to his. And afterwards, when Wilson came to Europe and he

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found things in Wilson that were in himself, and he saw how Wilson was prepared to yield anything—every selfish hope and his very life—for the League, then a feeling for Wilson came to him that grew still stronger as Wilson struggled and the League struggled and the world condemned both and Wilson died and the League seemed likely to die too.

### 3

When Smuts speaks to-day about great Americans he says that Alexander Hamilton was a greater man than Washington, and Wilson a greater man than Lincoln, and that Americans will yet acknowledge the greatness of Wilson—one day, when they are greater themselves. Wilson was too big a figure, he says, for the Americans of his time: a world figure, not an American figure. 'They wanted an American figure—a figure no bigger than the Monroe doctrine. . . .

'If I think', he says, 'of American statesmen who had a noble conception of life, I think of Lincoln and Wilson. But Wilson was a greater statesman, not only for the world but even for America. Take Lincoln as a war minister. He was a failure as a war minister. He had to make war against the South. That was inevitable. But how did he conduct the war? With all the power on his side it took him four years to beat the South. Time after time the South beat the North and they lost in the end, not through the ability of the North, but through their own exhaustion. Then, before the aftermath came home to him, Lincoln was murdered. He escaped all the unfortunate results of his own work, and the opprobrium fell on Grant. His murderer saved his reputation.

'It was, on the other hand, Wilson's reputation that was murdered. They murdered it with ridicule. Nobody re-

membered that Wilson was a man with the hand of death on him, standing alone against his country's betrayal of principles to which it was pledged.

'I don't say Wilson made no mistakes. He made a mistake in coming to Europe with a poor staff, and a worse mistake in coming without his opponents. He should have included some of his opponents—for instance, Elihu Root and Taft—among the delegates he brought with him, and it would have become a non-political affair, and gone through and all history would have been different.

'Instead of this, he left his opponents in America to conspire against him and they used the tragedy of Europe for their political ends. They made it a party business to turn down the treaty and the League in order to throw out the democrats.

'There are some who think Wilson should not have come to Paris at all. I don't agree with them. Only Wilson could have put through the League and did. He was the one statesman who had the power and the vision. The other statesmen weren't concerned about the League except as an instrument for their own ends—that is to say, their country's ends: Wilson put the League above this greedy squabbling. It was for the League he compromised on other things. And then everyone fastened on his small surrenders.

'Believe me, the trouble wasn't the small surrenders, or that Wilson didn't bring home what he called "the fabric" intact. Wilson was not a practical man. He had this vast structure of a plan which needed to be adapted to varying facts and circumstances and filled in with details, and as he got little help or understanding from his staff, he looked to others for these facts and details.

'He was not, as Keynes says in his *Economic Consequences*—I saw him a great deal and you can take it from me he was not so bamboozled that he could not even be debam-

boozled. If, for instance, he yielded his point about the Freedom of the Seas, it wasn't simply because the other Allies insisted on it, or because of bamboozlement. He had to yield it because it could not be squared with the fundamental conception of the League. Freedom of the Seas implies neutrality on the seas. If the League was to be effective—to be able to act in time of war—there could be no neutrality, no freedom of the seas. . . .

'The truth is America wanted a reason for denying Wilson. The world wanted a scapegoat. At that opportune moment Keynes brought out his *Economic Consequences of the Peace*. There were a few pages about Wilson in it which exactly suited the politics of America and the world's mood. When I encouraged Keynes to write that book, I knew his views about the statesmen at Paris. But I did not expect a personal note in his book, I did not expect him to turn Wilson into a figure of fun.

'These few pages about Wilson in Keynes' book made an Aunt Sally of the noblest figure—perhaps the only noble figure—in the history of the war, and they led a fashion against Wilson that was adopted by the Intelligentsia of the day and is not yet past—the Intelligentsia (not the Intellectuals)—the people who, admiring only their own cleverness, despise real goodness, real thought, real wisdom. . . .

'But for Keynes' description of Wilson, nothing worse might have been fairly said of him than that he handled Congress ineptly when he took the League back to America or did not understand party politics. I remember saying to him "*Can you carry the treaty? Can you get your two-thirds majority?*" "I absolutely can" he said, and was struck down in the middle of his single-handed fight for it.

'He had no disciples. Perhaps it was a deficiency in him that he found none. I can't help remembering that if it depended on the Intelligentsia of the day, our knowledge of

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Christ would be a casual and contemptuous remark in Tacitus. A few fishermen in Galilee prevented it.'

### 4

Smuts says his first understanding of Wilson's quality came when he saw how Wilson stood single-handed by the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, which made a world gateway of the Panama Canal when all America wanted it for America alone. Yet it was not until Wilson came to Europe that Smuts found how near he felt to him.

They were, indeed, not unlike. And though this may seem to Smuts' disadvantage because Smuts has to-day many admirers in England and Wilson few, Smuts would not think so.

They were both, to begin with, professed democrats with the hearts of aristocrats. They were both puritans and idealists who yet could bend and compromise. They were equally shy, proud, secretive, lonely by instinct, at the same time affronted by disloyalty, and also magnetic. 'When one gets access to him', says Colonel House, 'there is no more charming man in all the world than Woodrow Wilson. He could use his charm to enormous personal and public advantage if he would.' He says also that Wilson's character was so difficult, complex and contradictory that it was impossible to judge him.

Smuts' character is even more difficult, complex and contradictory. His platitudes jostle his profundities. His cynicism laughs at his idealism. He is dependable and also incalculable. In the midst of all his higher truths—high above ordinary heads and also sometimes above mundane use—suddenly a chunk of earthy sense. Accident? Knowledge? Genius? That is what puzzles South Africans.

Smuts is as strange to South Africans as was Wilson to Americans. Sometimes they feel themselves charmed to a

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standstill by him, and then suddenly they feel that there he is before them in the flesh but yet he has disappeared: doesn't see them, know them, want them: so different from Botha, who, whenever he spoke to a person, made him feel that really and sincerely he was the one person in the world.

Smuts' demeanour does not indicate that he cares what people think of him, but it is enough to hear him say: 'Oh yes, my inhumanity!' to understand that he must care.

Perhaps, really, in the day by day, grasses have been a greater consolation to Smuts than people. Once, after having lost office in 1924, there was some excitement or other in the Union House, and everyone wondered where Smuts might be. Searchers found him, to their indignation, in his room of Leader of the Opposition kneeling on the floor and absorbedly sorting out grasses. . . .

He is more electric and vital than Wilson was, and with more varied interests. He must have refuges (not only poetry and philosophy, but veld and farming and several sciences) that Wilson lacked.

To go, then, and compare Smuts' outlook on life with Wilson's, to call it hardly less a combination of academic theory and mysticism, may seem far fetched. . . . Here is a man who is the essence of energy; who can act and loves action; who temperamentally wants to do everybody else's work; who is a guerrilla leader at thirty; who feels revolutions cannot be stopped without him; who, at forty-six, finding himself, unwarned, in the fiercest circumstances in history, is prepared to do anything, all the time, everywhere; who, at sixty-six, still cannot resist the highest and farthest mountains, or the call to go from village to village throughout a great country addressing the people. . . . How (it seems strange) can such a man's conception of life not depend on the plain realities of his experiences among his



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fellow men? Yet, the fact is, it doesn't. Actually a great part of Smuts' energy is directed to the very purpose of compelling dull, docile, bewildered or resistant men to ways of thinking which cannot be theirs and to courses of what-ought-to-be which they never follow to the goal he sets. Never. But he always thinks they will.

He even says they have—sincerely and, indeed, exultantly. One has, he grants, lost something on the way and followed rather strange paths. But what of little losses or strayings? Is this not journey's end? It is an end of some sort, but hardly the end he predicated. There is a painful gallantry in the way Smuts says: 'Now we have reached our end.' And a few years later, without ever having admitted that the end wasn't reached last time, again: 'Now we must make a real effort to achieve our end. . . .' Losses, strayings, arrival, exultation! Yet, after all, no end—and still another beginning and so over and over.

Until one day he says, not 'we are coming to the end', but 'I am coming to the end. . . .'

Similarly Wilson with the Peace Treaty. Whatever anyone broke from his treaty, it always remained to him inviolate. 'The treaty as a whole', he told the Americans who rejected it, 'is penetrated throughout with the principles to which America has devoted her life.' As far as he was concerned, the treaty he took to Europe was the treaty he brought back to America.

There were even sentences Wilson spoke which might have been spoken by Smuts. 'The new things in the world are the things that are divorced from force. They are the moral compulsions of the human conscience.' Is this not the principle (continually expressed in such very words) of Smuts' whole life? Or Wilson's words, on coming into the war, of fighting 'for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the German peoples inclu-

ded; for the rights of nations, great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose of life and of obedience. . . .’ Or again: ‘The German people . . . did not originate or desire this hideous war or wish that we should be drawn into it; and we are vaguely conscious that we are fighting their cause, as they will one day see it, as well as our own. They are themselves in the grip of some sinister power that has at last stretched its ugly talons and drawn blood from us. . . .’ Might not Smuts have said these things in these very words—‘ugly talons’ and all?

Smuts has, indeed, as Wilson had, a faith in words. To say a thing seems to him well on the way to establishing it. For instance: ‘The man who would discover the real appropriate name for the system of entities that make up the British Empire would be doing a great service not only to the country but to constitutional theory.’ Wilson himself preferred to claim from Germany ‘no indemnity of any sort’, but ‘merely reparation, merely paying for the destruction done’. When Wilson read Smuts’ definition of the League as the heir, the inheritor, the successor, the reversionary, the liquidator, the trustee of Europe’s derelict empires, he was charmed into acceptance of more than a phrase. As Mr. Lloyd George adopted Smuts’ description of the British Commonwealth as a League of Nations, and with the description perhaps also the idea, so now Woodrow Wilson took up Smuts’ ‘successor to the empires’ phrase . . . and from the phrase was drawn to the principle, and from the principle to the plan, and from the plan to its author. And the final outcome was not only the incorporation of many of Smuts’ schemes and even words in the League Covenant itself, but also that in a matter of directly opposite significance Wilson looked to Smuts, and Smuts alone, for a decision.

## Chapter XIX

### SMUTS' LEAGUE

#### I

**A**uthorities generally (and all the documents, says Colonel House) declare that not a single idea of Woodrow Wilson's league plan was original. He selected, compiled, edited—no more. 'Speaking for myself,' he admitted at a preliminary meeting of the Peace Conference, 'I was unable to foresee the variety of circumstances with which the League would have to deal. I was unable, therefore, to plan all the machinery necessary to meet differing and unexpected contingencies.'

There were also circumstances he could foresee and yet not meet. The answer to the most vital of these leaped upon him from Smuts' sentence. He had been wondering what was to become of 'the small nations, the embryo states, the derelict territories,' as Smuts called them, of broken Europe. To Wilson, no less than to Smuts, it had seemed impossible to put the fate of these lost ones into the hands of nominal victors hardly less lost themselves. 'The horrors and suffering of this war', Smuts said, 'have produced a temper in the people which must be reckoned with as the fundamental fact of the political situation in Europe to-day. The feeling of grief, bitterness, disillusion, despair, goes very deep: even in the victorious Entente countries that feeling goes much deeper than the more superficial feeling of joy at the final result. The prolonged

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horror through which all have passed is a far more real, abiding and fundamental experience than the momentary joy at the end.'

Wilson found in Smuts' solution his own solution: not to the embittered conquerors, but to the League itself, must fall the broken states of Europe. Others had conceived a League entering upon the affairs of Europe as 'an outsider or stranger'. Smuts saw it taking possession as 'the natural master of the house'. Not only would the former German colonies, 'inhabited by barbarians', come to the League; not only states (like the Transcaucasian and Transcaspian provinces of Russia and the ex-Turkish dominions) which might be considered 'deficient in the qualities of statehood', but especially the new states of Europe. The different types of countries would be administered according to 'the principle of nationality, involving the ideas of political freedom and equality; the principle of autonomy which is the principle of nationality extended to peoples not yet capable of complete independent statehood; the principle of political decentralisation which will prevent the powerful nationality from swallowing the weak autonomy'. The League would be the universal guardian.

He saw new sovereign states arising in Europe under the aegis of the League; a large number of autonomous states, no longer oppressed by their neighbours, but befriended, advised and assisted by individual great states; a small number of areas directly administered by some of the powers; over all the League as a live controlling authority. It was, says Mr. Robert Lansing (Wilson's Secretary of State), this 'novelty in international relations', this 'product of the creative mind of General Smuts', that impressed Wilson no less than the descriptive phrase which had first caught his fancy and which, as Mr. Lansing says, he repeated again and again.

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In almost exactly the words of Smuts' clause nine, he added to his own draft (and through every variation of that draft retained it) this sentence:

'As successor to the Empires, the League of Nations is empowered, directly and without the right of delegation, to watch over the relations *inter se* of all new independent states arising or created out of the Empires and shall assume and fulfil the duty of conciliating and composing differences between them with a view to the maintenance of settled order and general peace.'

Eight months later he himself confessed to his Senate that he had rewritten his own draft of the covenant 'in the light of a paper by General Smuts, who seemed to have done some very clear thinking in regard to what was to be done to the pieces of the dismembered Empires'.

Smuts had, at the same time, to do more than think out clearly the work and destiny of the League. How exactly—by whom—was this work to be done? What or who would be the League?

He answered these questions in the part of his treatise called 'The Constitution of the League'.

### 2

The idea of a super-state, he said here, had to be discarded. 'No super-sovereignty is wanted in the world now arising. States will be controlled not by compulsion from above but by consent from below.'

The idea of a debating society had equally to be discarded. 'We want', he said, 'an instrument of government which, however much talk is put into the one end, will grind out decisions at the other end.'

He took it as an axiom that all life was founded in law. 'Government, like thought or mathematics or physical science, rests on certain fundamental unalterable forms, cate-

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gories or laws. . . . The division of government into legislation, administration and justice is fundamental in this sense, and should be adhered to by us in devising the new system of world government . . . a system where the constituents will be not citizens but states.'

He discussed the form of the system. There might be, he suggested, a general conference to consider international questions. This General Conference was not to be the 'futile debating society' he specifically rejected. What actually it was to be except the conventional Upper Chamber to look important and talk in public so that 'for the first time in history, people will hear great subjects discussed on an international platform'—the essential value of the General Conference was at first not clear. But it has, in fact, become the Assembly of the League that settles its general policy and objectives.

'The real work' Smuts himself delegated to the council, which would have as permanent members the most significant representatives of five or six Great Powers, and four additional members selected in rotation from two panels consisting of, respectively, the intermediate powers below the rank of Great Powers, and the minor states belonging to the League. The council would deal with anything from patents and waterways to fisheries and white slave traffic. It would have, as at Versailles, the assistance of an established secretariat and staff.

'Watertight compartments and partition walls between the nations and the continents', said Smuts, 'have been knocked through, and the new situation calls for world government. If the League refuses to function, some other machinery will have to be created to deal with the new problems which transcend all national limits.'

He did not presume that the League would at once function perfectly. 'We can only proceed tentatively and

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hope for very partial success. In that spirit the above scheme is suggested.'

The council would also deal with such matters as fell into the third part of his discussion: the League and World Peace.

### 3

Towards a plan of world peace Smuts analysed three proposals which had already, he said, received much public attention. These were:

The abolition of conscription and of conscript armies;

The limitation of armaments;

The nationalisation of munitions production.

'While the Great Powers', he said, 'are allowed to raise conscript armies without hindrance or limit, it would be vain to expect the lasting preservation of world peace. If the instrument is ready for use the occasion will arrive and the men will arise to use it. I look upon conscription as the taproot of militarism: unless that is cut, all our labours will eventually be in vain.' He considered the abolition of conscription 'the most important of the three proposals for disarmament'.

As to the second proposal, the limitation of armaments: 'If conscription', he said, 'is abolished and militia or volunteer forces authorised for the future defence of states, the scale of direct armament and equipment on a fair basis *for such forces* should be determined by the council, and it should not be exceeded by any state without permission of the council.'

The third proposal, the nationalisation of munition production, seemed to him indisputably sound.

He went on to discuss the matter of war prevention. It was, he said, generally agreed that war could not be absolutely prevented. All one could do was to compel dispu-

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tants 'not to go to war before their dispute had been inquired into and either decided or reported upon by an impartial outside authority'. Smuts saw in the League this impartial authority. He saw in the moratorium it could enforce and the ensuing public outcry, the greatest hope for preventing the actual coming of war. Failure to observe the moratorium would be punished. How? 'This is the most important question of all in regard to the preservation of world peace. Without an effective sanction for the keeping of the moratorium the League will remain a pious aspiration or a dead letter. . . .'

The breaker of the moratorium should be held, he suggested, '*ipso facto* at war with all the other members of the League, great and small alike, which will sever all relations of trade and finance with the lawbreaker and prohibit all intercourse with its subjects and also prevent as far as possible all commercial and financial intercourse between the subject of the lawbreaker and those of any other state, whether a member of the League or not.' Since, however, a powerful military state might hope to defeat the boycott by a sudden military blow, the League was unlikely, he thought, to prove a success unless in the last resort the maintenance of the moratorium was guaranteed by force.

He considered the matter of arbitration in cases of judicable disputes, and of mediation by the council itself in cases of those 'vague and intangible' issues springing from 'special grounds of national psychology. . . .'

'I have now', he concluded, 'come to the end of this short sketch of the League of Nations. Whatever its imperfections, I hope it has shown that the project is not only workable, but necessary as an organ of the new world now arising. . . . The need, political and psychological, is imperative; the opportunity is unique; only the blindness of statesmen could now prevent the coming of the new in-



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stitution which will, more than anything else, reconcile the peoples to the sufferings they have endured in this war. . . . The tents have been struck, and the great caravan of humanity is once more on the march. . . .

### 4

Smuts' League is given in an appendix, but here shortly are the twenty-one clauses he incorporated in his three sections:

#### THE POSITION AND POWERS OF THE LEAGUE

(1) The forthcoming Peace Conference shall regard itself as the first meeting of the League to work out its organisation, functions and programme.

(2) The League is the reversionary of the territories formerly belonging to Russia, Austria-Hungary and Turkey.

(3) Victorious powers may not annex these territories, whose peoples should determine their own future government.

(4) Additional control is the function of the League.

(5) The League may delegate this control to a mandatory approved by the people of the territories.

(6) The League shall define the scope of this control.

(7) The mandatory state shall maintain the policy of the Open Door.

(8) The League will not recognise or admit new states arising from the old Empires unless their arms and forces conform to its standards.

(9) The League will watch over these new states.

#### THE CONSTITUTION OF THE LEAGUE

(10) The Constitution of the League will be that of a permanent conference between its constituents, and it will con-

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sist of a General Conference, a Council, and Councils of Arbitration and Conciliation.

(11) The General Conference will discuss matters affecting international law, the limitation of armaments and other general resolutions.

(12) The Council will be the Executive Committee and it will consist of the Prime Ministers or Foreign Secretaries of the Great Powers together with representatives drawn in rotation from the two panels of Middle and Minor states, a minority of three or more having the power to veto any action of the Council. A permanent secretariat will be appointed.

(13) The Council will meet periodically, and the Prime Ministers or Foreign Secretaries annually.

(14) The Council will take any necessary executive action in international affairs. It will administer property of an international character. It will formulate measures of international law, for the limitation of armaments and the promotion of world peace.

## THE LEAGUE AND WORLD PEACE

(15) Conscription shall be abolished.

(16) The Council shall determine armaments essential to self-defence.

(17) Armament factories shall be nationalised subject to the Council's inspection, and compelled to furnish the Council with returns of their imports and exports.

The Peace Treaty shall provide that:

(18) League members may not go to war before submitting their dispute to arbitration or the Council's inquiry, nor until the issue of an award or report, nor even then against a member complying with the award or report.

(19) League members breaking the Covenant under clause 18 become at war with other members (whose naval

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and military contributions the League shall determine); subject to economic and financial boycott by these members and the outside states they can influence; and liable after peace to permanent disarmament.

(20) Disputes not susceptible to negotiation go to arbitration.

(21) Disputes not susceptible to arbitration go before the Council which, after attempting to make peace, publishes its recommendations.

### 5

The thoughts and words of Smuts which occur in the League Covenant are also given in an appendix. It will be seen there that the Covenant uses ideas from almost every one of Smuts' clauses; and that the words of the Covenant's Article XVI, under whose terms Italy was penalised for attacking Abyssinia, and also of its significant Article XIII are taken almost verbatim from Smuts' clauses nineteen and twenty.

The ideas of Smuts that the Covenant does not adopt are Smuts' most liberal and novel ideas, and, in fact, the very essence of his plan which so drew Wilson: the system of mandates for brokendown Europe. . . .

On the day Smuts' League Plan was published, and the announcement of his resignation from the War Cabinet, there appeared also the news of Louis Botha's arrival in England. Botha was ill with a liver trouble which affected his legs and heart, and, remembering how his father and brother had died of the same illness, he believed he would be dead before 1919 was past, and, in fact, he was dead by August of 1919.

Towards the middle of January he and Smuts went to attend the Peace Talks in Paris.

## Chapter XX

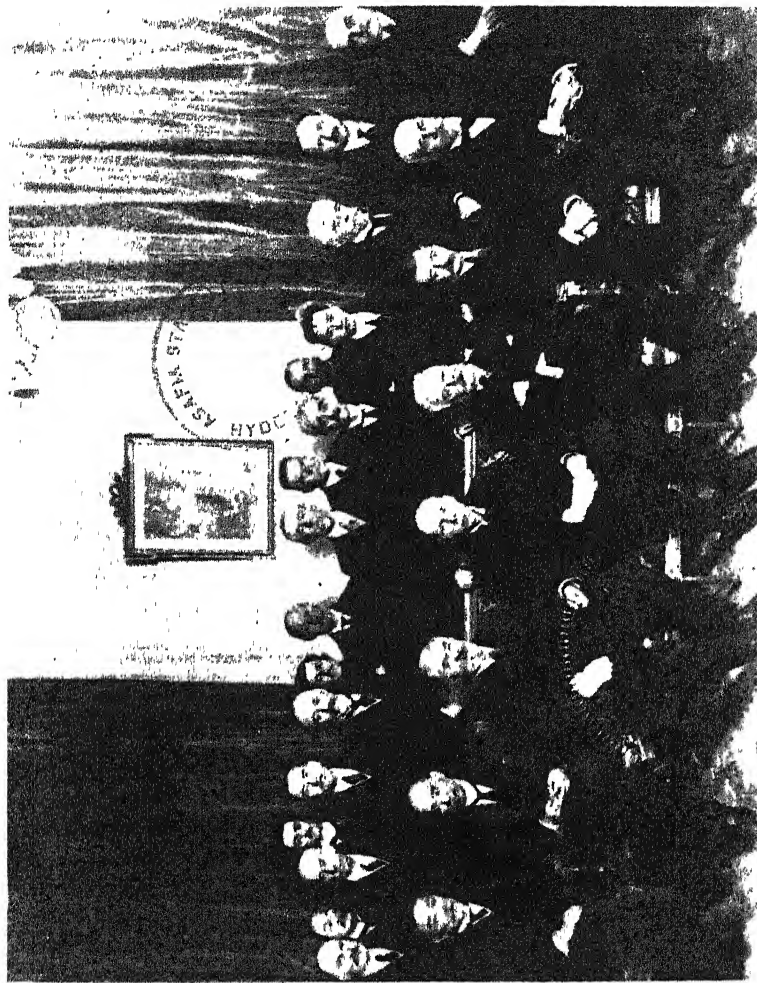
PARIS, 1919

### I

**I**t was with the following words that Woodrow Wilson brought the League and America into the Peace Conference:

'You can imagine, gentlemen, I daresay, the sentiments and the purpose with which representatives of the United States support this great project for a League of Nations. We regard it as the keystone of the whole programme which expressed our purpose and our ideal in the war, and which the Associated Nations have accepted as the basis of the settlement. If we return to the United States of America without having made every effort in our power to realise this programme, we should return to meet the merited scorn of our fellow citizens. For they are a body that constitutes a great democracy. They expect their leaders to speak their thoughts and no private purpose of their own. They expect their representatives to be their servants. We have no choice but to obey their mandate. But it is with the greatest enthusiasm and pleasure that we accept that mandate; and, because this is the keystone of the whole fabric, we have pledged our every purpose to it, as we have to every item of the fabric. . . .'

These are other words he said about the League: 'Many terrible things have come out of this war, gentlemen, but some very beautiful things have come out of it. Wrong has



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been defeated, but the rest of the world has been more conscious than it ever was before of the majesty of Right. People who were suspicious of one another can now live as friends and comrades in a single family, and desire to do so. The miasma of distrust, of intrigue, is cleared away. Men are looking eye to eye and saying: "We are brothers and have a common purpose. We did not realise it before, but now we do realise it, and this is our covenant of fraternity and of friendship." "

It was in this spirit Woodrow Wilson entered the Peace Conference.

To back his ideals he had promissory notes of the Allies, and the knowledge that America could feed the world.

## 2

The Peace Conference in Paris is a subject on which many distinguished people have been brilliantly scathing, and Smuts says it was the unhappiest time of his life. The impression history will perpetuate is that a number of rapacious and tedious old men sat in ghoulish argument while the world sank beneath them.

It is very likely that people were not at their best in Paris in 1919. Smuts himself was not at his best. Towards the end of 1917 Colonel House recorded that Smuts was the only one among the governing statesmen who did not seem tired. How far Smuts had come from those days may be judged by his attitude in August of 1918 when he simply could not see cause to believe that the war might soon be over. The depression which manifested itself then was on him in Paris. 'In Paris', he says, 'I met no one outside conference circles. I visited no French home. I saw none of what are considered the gaieties of Paris—nothing of Paris really except a few picture galleries. I was busy all the time and in despair all the time. Botha could not help me. Though in our work

we had always been in absolute accord, and after his death I carried on as he would have wished, outside our work we lived in different worlds.

'During the last two years our worlds had grown still further apart; and I could not get him to understand my feeling, and, at the same time, I could not get the Europeans to understand it (because, in a way, I was apart from them too), and I knew, besides, they didn't want to understand it, and so there I was powerless and not only in despair, but desperate. . . .'

Had Smuts more reason to be unhappy than his colleagues? He might have been troubled in a large way about humanity, but he had no cause for distress in his intimate affairs. His own country, as he himself came to say, had prospered in the war. His family had always been well and safe out of the war. He had become in himself and in the world a big man through the war. He was younger and healthier than his fellows; and by nature so optimistic and vital that as, in his twenties, old men had leaned on him, so still, in his sixties, young men lean on him. If Smuts was in a mood not only of despair but desperation after the war, certainly the others must have been in an abnormal mood too—for, after all, Western civilisation was as much their concern as his, and actually nearer their material life. Paris itself—the heart of a devastated land, for four years the conscious objective of the enemy's triumph, with only one prayer and determination for the future: to be safe against the enemy—Paris itself was little likely to restore in her hosts and guests a feeling of benevolent placidity.

In fact, the Peace representatives came to Paris in that mood of release from danger which manifests itself in the shaken body and the cracking voice. Sacha Guitry has described how Clemenceau took his head in his hands and wept—told Guitry himself how he wept—when he heard



the Germans wanted an armistice. It was the anguish of past events that made Mr. Lloyd George and Clemenceau fly at one another over the question of who should have the honour—the French or the English—of signing the Turkish armistice; made Clemenceau reply to Wilson's question 'Do you wish me to go home?'—'I do not wish you to go home, but I intend to go myself,' and rush from the conference; and Mr. Lloyd George become impatient with Smuts so that there were recriminations and taunts between them; and Mr. Lloyd George and Sir F. E. Smith and nine of the most distinguished lawyers in England press for the hanging of the Kaiser. ('As chief Law Officer of the Crown', wrote F. E. Smith, 'I say quite plainly that I should feel the greatest difficulty in being responsible in any way for the trial of subordinate criminals if the ex-Kaiser is allowed to escape.') The sense of a maddened world had even something to do with Smuts' own particular contribution to the peace—his opinion on reparations.

What sort of men actually went to make up this Council of Four, this supposed engine of evil? 'It is an extraordinary fact', says Mr. Keynes, 'that the fundamental economic problem of a Europe starving and disintegrating before their eyes was the one question in which it was impossible to arouse the interest of the Four.'

Yet Mr. Lloyd George risked his life to speak for the Boers in the Boer War. Clemenceau was one of the four men in France who endured outrage and contumely in the cause of Dreyfus, saying: 'A country without justice is a mere enclosure of animals designed for the butcher.' Orlando opposed the Fascism of Mussolini. Wilson fought America for his principles and died for them. It is ludicrous for the nations to rise up now and say that the Council of Four (or any, or all, of the delegates) could have made the world a better place, only they didn't want to.

The nations themselves didn't want them to. The nations themselves were against the mood of awed thanksgiving that, on the conclusion of the armistice, brought Mr. Lloyd George to say: 'We must not allow any sense of revenge, any spirit of greed, any grasping desire to override the fundamental principle of righteousness.' It was not because he led, but because he marched with public opinion—offering to hang the Kaiser, and make Germany pay Britain's war debts—that Mr. Lloyd George so overwhelmingly won his election after the armistice. With this mandate from the people he went to Paris. To Paris three hundred and seventy members of Parliament sent him a telegram demanding fulfilment of his election pledges, and he was attacked in the House as a pro-German. 'Break thou the arm of the wicked', was the human cry. Every one of the victor nations sent representatives to get reparation, security for the future, and also revenge; and there was not a nation which would have received back without fury an empty-handed representative. Even America that hadn't wanted her representative to go to Paris at all—that wanted to be done with everything in Europe and should have feared, therefore, rewards leading to future obligations—even in the hostile Senate in Washington they asked Wilson, when he came back from the Peace, whether America was getting any part of the German Reparation Funds.

None of the victor nations doubted that Germany had caused the war and their ruin, and that they were entitled to retribution.

There was Britain, fallen from her place as first power in the world. Had Britain not to rehabilitate herself, and had she to reject the warning of her navy chiefs concerning German bases in her old colonies? Smuts himself, more essentially sympathetic to Germany than any other delegate, proposed, almost as soon as the conference began, that

'Having regard to the record of German administration in the colonies formerly belonging to the German Empire, and to the menace which the possession by Germany of submarine bases in many parts of the world would necessarily contribute to the freedom and security of all nations, the Allied and Associated Powers are agreed that in no circumstances should any of the German colonies be restored to Germany.'

There was France. What France said was that 'France does not demand the left bank of the Rhine for herself—she has no use for it, and her interests, like her ideals, dissuade her from claiming it.' Very well. But could she let Germany keep it, she pointed out, as a base of attack?

And Russia: Where, asked Russia, was Russia among the victors? Russia that had lost seven million men killed, wounded and incapacitated, that had spent, before the Bolshevik régime, a hundred milliards, whose richest part was devastated over an area three times as large as Belgium and the North of France?

And Serbia: In Germany, said Serbia, everything was intact—livestock, communications, homes, industries; but in Serbia a third of the population was gone and the annual interest on the war debt was larger than the whole pre-war budget.

Was not, again, one of the very motives of the war the restoration of Belgium? Should not Roumania be restored? Was not Poland fighting Germany now that Germany was down? For what had Japan entered the war? And Italy ('I see', says Smuts concerning Italy's aspirations in Abyssinia, 'I see Italy complains she did badly out of the war—no colonies and so on. Italy did well out of the war: she got her bargain, she got her loot. As for colonies, she never asked for colonies till she failed to force Kemal Pasha and to oc-

cupy her allotted part of Asia Minor. No, I have just been thinking about it: I can't remember that Italy ever said a word about colonies at the Peace.'). . . .

The Ukraine reminded Mr. Lloyd George that she was the first country to give her subjects equality without regard to race. Albania said her noble people were entitled (because of their nobility) to enlargement. Bulgaria said she was not responsible for the disastrous policy of 1915—the new Bulgaria ought to be encouraged. Czechoslovakia wanted territory. Greece wanted territory. The Emir Feisal wanted territory—he said he had little but gratitude to offer in return, but he would like to have whatever mattered in the Near East and money to keep it up. The Jews wanted Palestine.

Australia objected to mandates on principle. Still, if mandates were being handed round, she preferred the Pacific Islands, that had phosphates, to the islands that were only an expense.

India wanted the mandate over German East Africa. 'Here is your opportunity of saying to India: "You have done well for the Empire."'

The Panama Negroes also wanted Germany's African colonies: they wanted, for the Negroes' services in the war, a national home in Africa.

Even the South African natives wanted a national home in Africa.

Even General Hertzog wanted a national home—at least, more of a national home—in Africa.

Even Smuts wanted something in Africa. . . .

There was a country which wanted a good deal, yet, six months after the Armistice, could not decide how best to demonstrate her deserts—by fighting, by not fighting, and in the midst of fighting.

Towards the end of March a government had arisen

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in Hungary that was, or was not, a government; that honoured, or did not, the word of the previous government; that might, or might not, be recognised as an authority with whom one could make engagements for peace.

## Chapter XXI

### SMUTS NEGOTIATES WITH HUNGARY

#### I

**I**t was just a year since Hungarian soldiers, freed from Russian captivity by the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, had come home full of the ideas that were going about Russia—ideas of revolution and universal peace and human rights.

Hungary was ready for such ideas, and a communist party began to assemble under a young Jew called Bela Kun. There was also a socialist party under Count Karolyi. And when Bulgaria fell, and one saw the doom of the what-had-been, the Hungarians did as all other losing peoples: they rose. Students demonstrated, a students' council was formed, and a national council with Karolyi as president. On October 31st, 1918, the revolutionaries seized Budapest, appointed Karolyi Prime Minister, murdered Count Tisza, the royalist Minister President, and demobilised their returning soldiers. On November 3rd Austria-Hungary accepted an armistice at the hands of the Italians, and on November 13th socialist Hungary accepted another armistice at the hands of the French. For what the French had felt about the British signing the armistice with Turkey, they felt too about the Italians signing the armistice with Austria-Hungary. They coveted the honour. They wanted also to make the arrangements. The Hungarians, for their part, were anxious to dissociate themselves from the Austrians, and

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they preferred the French terms—particularly their boundaries.

But then, naturally, the Italians were angry and refused to acknowledge the French Armistice. Even after the French agreed to call their armistice a Military Convention, the Italians remained dissatisfied, and moved (successfully) for its official excision. So now the French Armistice (or Military Convention) existed in fact but not in form beside the accepted Italian Armistice signed on November 3rd, and the Hungarians more or less respected both agreements, but preferably the French.

Two months after the signing of these agreements, Hungary declared itself a Republic with Karolyi as president. Next month the communists rose, that were full of Russian ideas, and Karolyi's party, thinking what a good impression it would make on the Western Democracies, opposed them and put their leader, Bela Kun, in gaol. And having now proved, by their separate convention with the French, that they were dissociated from Germany and Austria; and, by their measures against communists, that they were dissociated from Russia, they looked to Paris for reward. They hoped they might at least be treated as neutrals and given rights of self-determination. . . .

Yet all the time they were still fighting the Roumanians.

The reply from Paris—from the Supreme Council—was to declare a neutral zone between the Hungarian and Roumanian troops in Transylvania which set back the Hungarian frontier. The measure was a temporary one to stop the persistent fighting, but the Hungarians thought it a territorial gift to the Roumanians at their expense; and they were so indignant over it—and over the 'arrogance and pretensions' of the Czechs and Roumanians, the military pressure and exactions of actually two armistice agreements, and the sternness of the Allied Missions in Budapest—that they called

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upon Karolyi to resign, and he, no less embittered than his followers, willingly did so. . . . 'The government', he proclaimed, 'has resigned. Those who until to-day have governed by the will of the people, and with the support of the Hungarian proletariat, have realised that the compelling force of circumstances requires a new direction. . . . The Paris Conference has decided that practically the whole territory of Hungary shall be militarily occupied. The Entente Mission in Buda has declared that it henceforward regards the line of demarcation as a political frontier. . . .

'I, therefore, the Provisional President of the Hungarian Republic, in face of this decision of the Paris Conference, appeal to the proletariat of the world for justification and assistance. I resign and give the power into the hands of the proletariat of the Hungarian people.'

The Hungarian people thereupon visited Bela Kun in his gaol, and put themselves, socialists no less than communists, under Kun's direction.

It was done in a few hours, without bloodshed, under a policy that forbade bloodshed, and immediately all private property—'houses, shops, personal effects, labour, education and experience'—became the property of the new State . . . which, at the same time, had neither food nor money.

In this dilemma Bela Kun informed the Supreme Council that he was prepared to recognise the armistice signed by the former government; that his alliance with Russia was not a formal diplomatic alliance, but merely an entente cordiale (not to be interpreted as a desire on his part to break off relations with the Entente or make war against it); and that Hungary wished to be at peace with all the world—a state where 'every man will live for his own work', hostile to no other man, and with only one great desire: human co-operation.



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Bela Kun offered to negotiate with the Supreme Council concerning territorial questions and the self-determination of the people; to this end, he invited a diplomatic mission to visit Hungary; and what the Supreme Council did was not, in words, to accept Bela Kun's invitation, yet actually to send the diplomatic mission.

They asked Smuts to lead it.

### 2

It was on April 1st that Smuts left Paris for Budapest. His terms of reference were to examine the general working of the Armistice of November 3rd, 1918; the Military Convention of November 13th, 1918; the status of the new government; economic conditions; and, in particular, the arrangements about the neutral zone. He was to explain to the Hungarian Government that this zone had only the purpose of stopping bloodshed: it would not affect the eventual disposition of boundaries under the Peace Treaty; and he was himself to make the adjustments he thought desirable in the present boundaries.

There were several Allied Missions established in Budapest, and the Hungarians complained of their conduct, and they complained of the Hungarians' conduct. Smuts was to examine the various complaints, and he might find it useful, it was suggested, to recognise the French Military Convention as well as the Italian Armistice—the French would like it.

He was further to investigate the progress of Bolshevism, and, in general, for the purposes of his mission, to go wherever he chose in Hungary, and do anything.

The English Tory papers were vehemently against the mission. They regarded the mission, they said, with invincible distrust; negotiations with the Bolsheviks, they said, would be considered by the exultant Bolsheviks themselves

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as a sign of weakness; the Hungarian Bolsheviks were the advance guard of Lenin and Trotsky and simultaneously the tools of Berlin; Smuts' mission to Hungary had as much chance as the dove's from the Ark—it would fail as surely as his mission to Austria had failed in December, 1917.

Smuts took with him a company of fourteen, among them Mr. Harold Nicolson, who, in his book, *Peacemaking* 1919, describes their adventure.

### 3

Mr. Nicolson, like all Smuts' chroniclers, duly relates that 'Smuts is very reserved. I cannot make out what his own view is'. But he gathered the impression that 'although the ostensible purpose of our mission is to fix an armistice line between the Hungarians and Roumanians, yet the real idea at the back is to see whether Bela Kun is worth using as a vehicle for getting into touch with Moscow'.

'The ostensible purpose' of the mission was, as it happened, also 'the real idea', but if anyone, in those days, saw in Smuts' mind the thought of Moscow it was with good reason. He had Moscow on the brain: he saw everywhere, and particularly in the future, the red hand of Moscow; even his pleas on behalf of Germany were largely grounded in his fear of Moscow. It must have been with the feeling of going to see an ugly fascinating sight that he was now on his way to make contact with an actual Soviet Government.

They travelled through snow and arrived in Vienna on April 3rd. 'Everybody looks very pinched and yellow: no fats for four years . . . the town has an unkempt appearance: paper lying about, the grass plots round the statues are strewn with litter: many windows broken and repaired by boards nailed up. The people in the streets are dejected and ill dressed. . . .'

They went to the Embassy and met there Sir Thomas

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Cuninghame, head of the British Military Mission, who told them he had arranged for their lunch. 'Go off to Sachers to luncheon. We are followed by a staring shambling crowd. The police walk with us. Smuts is silent, dignified, reserved. A huge luncheon at Sachers which costs twelve hundred kronen. Smuts is furious. He ticks Cuninghame off sharply. He calls it a "gross error in taste." He decrees from now on we shall feed only upon our own army rations and not take anything from the starving countries. His eyes when angry are like steel rods.'

Mr. Nicolson saw the Commissar at the Bolshevik headquarters and told him Smuts was on a special mission from the Supreme Council at Paris and wanted to go to Budapest that night. It was the first Bela Kun's Government knew of the acceptance of their invitation. 'I have seldom seen upon a man's face such successive waves of astonishment. "That means", he said, "that you recognise the government of Bela Kun?" I say it means nothing of the sort.'

The Commissar telephoned to Budapest, and returned to say that Bela Kun, with every assurance as to their safe conduct and courteous reception, would be delighted to see them.

The mission woke next morning in Budapest—'even sadder and more unkempt than Vienna. Everything bedraggled. Rain pouring on yellow faces and clothes in rags. Groups of Red Guards going about with hatstands on which they drape "presents". . . . If they find a shop open they go in and take "presents", which they hang on the hatstand. Boots, sausages, red underclothes, all this in the soaking rain. No other sign of revolution or Bolshevism except a universal sadness and shabbiness.'

Bela Kun duly came to the train (Smuts' quarters in Budapest) to pay his official call. Mr. Nicolson describes him as 'a little man of about thirty: puffy white face and loose

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wet lips: shaven head: impression of red hair: shifty suspicious eyes: he has the face of a sulky and uncertain criminal'.

### 4

The terms Smuts offered Bela Kun were as follows: The Hungarian Government was to accept the Armistice of November 3rd and the Military Convention of November 13th. The Hungarian troops were to withdraw to a new line, the Roumanian troops were to stay where they were; the area between the two frontiers was to be considered a neutral zone and occupied by representative Entente forces. He assured Bela Kun, however, that these arrangements were without prejudice to the eventual peace terms and that the Hungarians would be given an opportunity to state their case to the Great Powers before final adjustments were made. And meanwhile he himself (said Smuts) would recommend the removal of the blockade and the granting of facilities for the importation of urgent commodities.

Bela Kun's reply to Smuts was that if he accepted these conditions his government would fall and his troops mutiny, and, since no other party was strong enough to take power, a revolution would follow. If, therefore, the Allies insisted on these terms they had better occupy Budapest, the neutral zone and other districts, assume responsibility and run Hungary themselves. 'The Hungarian Government', he said, 'recognises the principles of nationality laid down by Mr. Wilson and considers that the situation should be governed by popular self-determination'. He proposed that Hungary might be allowed to retain her present boundary lines and the Entente forces occupy a neutral zone under their new—that is to say, Soviet—constitution. He asked for a raising of the blockade; for food and coal; for the protection of workers in the occupied territories. The workers, for their part, would protect the property of foreign subjects. The new

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Hungarian Government, he said, renounced the ideals of territorial integrity formerly prevalent; but they suggested, as an alternative to the Supreme Council's creation of a neutral zone at Hungary's expense, a conference between representatives of Hungary, Bohemia, Roumania, Serbia, Yugoslavia and German Austria to settle their own frontier and economic questions. Over this conference, to which Hungary would come with an accommodating spirit and a willingness to make territorial concessions, Smuts might preside. Food, said Bela Kun, was more important than frontiers.

He left Smuts to consider his reply, and Smuts telegraphed the details of their negotiations to Balfour, approving Bela Kun's proposal, and suggesting that, since the Entente representatives were already at Paris, the Central Powers' representatives might also go to Paris; and in Paris, moreover, away from their local perturbations, the Hungarians would be more amenable.

That was on the morning of April 4th, and Smuts, with the sense that everything was going very well, went to have lunch on his train. 'We lunch', noted Mr. Nicolson, 'off army rations. Beans and cheese. Bela Kun had requisitioned the Hungaria for us which is the Ritz of Budapest. He has, it seems, hoisted a huge Union Jack and a huge Tricolour on it, hoping to parade our presence as an advertisement that Paris had recognised him and come as supplicants to his Capital. Smuts refuses to budge from the train. Here we are to stick. He does not want us to enter the train or to leave the station. So all the air we shall get is pacing along our own stretch of wet platform towards the dry platform under the station roof.'

Bela Kun came for his answer at three o'clock, and Smuts said the Hungarian troops would be allowed to withdraw, not to the temporary line recently nominated by the Su-

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preme Council, but to the political frontier between Hungary and Roumania agreed on by the Territorial subcommittee of the Peace Conference, and he also promised that, among the Allied forces occupying the neutral zone, Roumanian troops would not be included.

Bela Kun left, very pleased, to put the proposals before his Cabinet, and Smuts prepared a draft agreement.

In the evening Bela Kun, accompanied by two of his ministers, brought his Cabinet's approval and, taking the draft agreement, retired with his companions to consider and sign it. He returned it to Smuts—not signed. He said might he just once more, for the sake of absolute certainty, go over the agreement with his colleagues. 'He sat there', writes Mr. Nicolson, 'hunched, sulky, suspicious and frightened. Smuts talks to him as if he were talking to the Duke of Abercorn: friendly, courteous, but not a touch of surrender of his own tremendous dignity. . . .'

So Bela Kun left to consult his colleagues again (his colleagues, Smuts realised, in Moscow). . . .

He brought the news next day that if he signed the agreement, civil war would break out in the neutral zone, and the government would immediately fall. And vehemently though the government repudiated the idea that Hungary was at war with the Great Powers, and anxious though they were for peace with everyone, and badly as they needed the goodwill of the Allies, they could not agree to the Armistice boundaries of November 3rd. The most they could accept was the line for the Roumanians laid down in the French Military Convention of November 13th.

Smuts, as he officially reported, sympathised not only with the Hungarians' misery (urging that the blockade should at once be removed) but also with their resentment at the Allies' constantly increasing demands. Yet, since the Roumanians had already advanced far beyond the line of

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the French Military Convention and readjustment would now cause trouble with the Roumanians, he refused Bela Kun's offer and gave instructions for the return of his mission that night.

Fifteen minutes before the train was due to leave Bela Kun and three of his companions came to the station. 'There in the half-lit dining car, Smuts receives them. They hand him a Note which he reads twice over. . . . "No, gentlemen", he says, "this is not a Note which I can accept. There must be no reservations." They look silent and sullen. Smuts makes a final appeal to them, asking them in their own interests to accept our proposals without reservations. He is very frank. He says the Conference will not agree to send the Roumanians back to the Maros. They evidently think that he will propose some third line of compromise and fix a meeting for to-morrow. . . . "Well, gentlemen", he says, "I must bid you goodbye." They do not understand. He conducts them with exquisite courtesy on to the platform. He shakes hands with them. He then stands on the step of the train and nods to his A.D.C. They stand in a row upon the platform, expecting him to fix the time for the next meeting. And as they stand, the train gradually begins to move. Smuts brings his hand to the salute. We glide out into the night, retaining on the retinas of our eyes the picture of four bewildered faces looking up in blank amazement.

'We then dine. Smuts is delightful, telling us stories of the Veldt with a ring of deep home-sickness in his voice. A lovely man.'

### 5

This is Smuts' unofficial account of his mission. It lacks, it will be seen, Mr. Nicolson's pictorial quality:

'As Hungary was still at war, we could not get further than Vienna until the necessary arrangements were made

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there for us to go on to Budapest, and we rang up Bela Kun from Vienna.

'Bela Kun was a personal friend of Lenin's, and, of course, completely subservient to him and Trotsky. He was anxious to come to terms, but he had to refer everything to Moscow, so we didn't come to terms, and the Hungarians and Roumanians went on fighting, and in the end Bela Kun had to fly to Moscow. He was a Jew—not a bad little fellow. I liked Bela Kun.

'There is a description of this Hungary business in a book by Harold Nicolson. He came along with me. I asked for him. He was a bright young fellow. I liked Harold Nicolson.

'The Hungarians were triumphant at an emissary of the Great Powers coming to visit them in Budapest. But I was not concerned about their elation as long as I could change the attitude of their government, and I think I did. As for the different missions I found they were quite all right: No one was troubling them, but the poor Hungarians were having a bad time.

'On our return journey I met Masaryk. I went to see him in Prague. I also saw the leading Ministers in Vienna. There was that idea of Bela Kun's for an economic union between Hungary and Austria and the neighbouring countries, with conferences meeting under a representative of the Great Powers. The Central European countries were going to be split up into a number of weak and hostile states, and an economic union, I could see, supervised by the League, would be their only safeguard against one another and the future activities of Germany. It was a variation of my mandates idea. Masaryk was in favour of it too, and said he would be willing to participate in a conference to that end. He said such a union might be the saving of Europe.

'However, nothing came of it. In spite of Masaryk, the Czecho-Slovakians didn't want it, and the French didn't



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want it. Nobody took the long view. Nobody thought of anything but the troubles of the moment except Wilson.

'I went back to that wrangling in Paris and tried to get the scheme considered. I could not get it considered. I joined in the wrangling myself. I never realised till I looked through my papers afterwards, how near I was to a break with Lloyd George.'

The mission to Hungary had, in fact, only interrupted Smuts' participation in what he calls that wrangling in Paris. He himself was even the subject of a wrangling in London. For a wealthy man, called Sir Hedley Le Bas, conceived an idea of deposing Mr. Lloyd George (as Mr. Lloyd George had deposed Asquith) and making Smuts Dictator of England. To further his purpose, he financed a newspaper campaign which the *Daily Mail* malevolently attacked. And just after Smuts returned to Paris from Budapest there was a libel action against the *Daily Mail*, and the judge (Darling) summed up heavily against the *Daily Mail*, but the jury found it not guilty.

## Chapter XXII

### VEREENIGING: VERSAILLES

#### I

Smuts had imagined, in his innocence, that, as soon as the war was over, the people who had fought one another would rush up like good sportsmen, like players in a tennis match, and shake hands: give a 'helping hand . . . extend it in all generosity and magnanimity'.

Throughout the war no one had more powerfully denounced Germany than Smuts. Even after the war he had written to Mr. Lloyd George saying no reasonable man could deny Germany ought by every law of justice to pay the penalty of her crime. But he had not been able to feel it. His heart told him only that Germany had lost the war. She had lost the war, and seventeen years ago the Boers had lost a war. Of all the people at the Peace Conference, even including Germany's allies (ruined, they felt, for Germany's ambition), only two men knew any real sympathy for Germany: the two Boers who had lost a war themselves: Jan Christian Smuts and Louis Botha. They might have been the first to appreciate the difference between a war lost by a small people in self-defence against the greatest power of the day, and a war lost by a country 'preparing', as Woodrow Wilson said, 'for that war for generations . . . preparing every source, perfecting every skill, developing every invention which would enable her to master the European world; and, after mastering the European world, to

dominate the rest of the world'. But that very largeness of spirit which had brought them to the side of England for humanity's sake, brought them now, for humanity's sake, to the side of Germany. Clemenceau, rushing away from a conference meeting, called Wilson a pro-German. Wilson was never a pro-German; but, to the extent that when the war was ended Smuts' animosity also was ended—to this extent Smuts himself was a pro-German.

His bogies were Russia and France.

2

When Smuts was not agitating himself about France he was agitating himself about Russia. However much Germany might deserve punishment she had not, he pressed, to be left powerless against Russia. 'The peace terms as they are developing', he wrote to Mr. Lloyd George on March 19th, 'not only avowedly deprive Germany of the physical force required to resist external attack (which is more likely to come from Bolshevism than from any other quarter) but they deprive Germany of every atom of self-respect and reduce her morale to a point at which she may be incapable of resisting the other and perhaps more dangerous weapon of Bolshevism, namely propaganda.' He suggested to Mr. Lloyd George the following policy:

(1) The enormity of their crimes must be brought home to the German people.

(2) Means must be found for providing them with the physical force for resisting Bolshevism.

(3) We ought to try to build up the self-respect of the German people so that they may resist the approach of Bolshevism and believe in their own civilisation rather than in that which comes from Russia.

Not the war itself could make him doubt the quality of Germany's 'own civilisation' as he doubts it now. The

peace, he wrote again to Mr. Lloyd George a week later, was an impossible peace, conceived on a wrong basis. Even if Germany could bring herself to accept such a peace, it must prove unstable and promote the anarchy already overtaking Europe. 'The long delays, our daily communiqués with their record of small details which appear to the world to be trivialities and futilities, are in themselves enough to raise discontent,' and enough, he added, to madden also the victors.

Nor should one forget, he said, that Germany was a dominant factor on the Continent. On this recognition, peace had to be based as the Vienna Peace was based on the recognition that France was necessary to Europe. How could Germany with an army of a hundred thousand men maintain internal order and stem the Bolshevik wave from the East? How could there be even talk of Danzig going to Poland and the Saar to France? 'Are we in our sober senses or suffering from shell-shock? What has become of Wilson's Fourteen Points, or your repeated declarations against the humiliation and dismemberment of Germany? . . . We shall be judged, not by our protests, but by our acts.

'Instead of dismembering and destroying Germany, she ought in a measure to be taken into the scope of our policy, and be made responsible for part of the burden which is clearly too heavy for us to bear. Are we going to defend Poland and Bohemia as we have defended the Ukraine against the Bolsheviks? . . .'

Even at this late hour, he urged, the attitude towards Germany should be revised: let her not be dismembered, pauperised, enslaved and compelled to make reparation beyond her limits. Let her be welcomed to the League—now! 'Her complete economic exhaustion and disarmament would prevent her from becoming a military or naval dan-

ger in this generation. . . . My experience in South Africa has made me a firm believer in political magnanimity and you and Campbell-Bannerman's great record still remains not only the noblest, but also *the most successful* page in recent British statesmanship.'

He summarised his arguments:

'We cannot destroy Germany without destroying Europe.

'We cannot save Europe without the co-operation of Germany.'

'My fear', he prophesied (rightly, people in general think to-day), 'my fear is that the Paris Conference may prove one of the historic failures of the world.'

He emphasised his prophecy in a memorandum for the Peace Conference itself: 'You may strip Germany of her colonies, reduce her armaments to a mere police force and her navy to that of a fifth-rate power; all the same, in the end, if she feels that she has been unjustly treated in the peace of 1919 she will find means of exacting retribution from her conquerors. . . .'

And when, fifteen years later, human beings in Germany were, as he said, 'forced to develop into the image of men who ought to be in a lunatic asylum', it was the peace of 1919 he held responsible for their misfortune and the world's, and his cure was still his cure of 1919. 'How can the inferiority complex which is obsessing the soul of Germany be removed? There is only one way and that is to recognise her complete equality of status with her fellows and to do so frankly, freely and unreservedly. That is the only remedy for her disease. . . . Repugnant as the principles of Nazism may be to many other Western peoples, that is no reason why Germany's equal international position should not be recognised and the obsessions that lie at the root of Nazism be removed. . . .'

Upon which *The Times* that, in June 1919, had with de-

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liberate significance published his objection to the Treaty of Versailles in its column headed 'Through German Eyes', printed his speech of November, 1934, as a special pamphlet and said of it: 'A passing regret may perhaps be felt that a statement so perspicacious and wise, at once so imaginative and yet so plainly derived from hard experience in politics and war, should not have come from the lips of a member of our own Cabinet.' But the *Manchester Guardian* that, in June 1919, had considered his objection to the Treaty 'as significant as the Treaty,' drily remarked: 'The military discrimination against Germany . . . is no more the root cause of Nazism (though historically a stimulant of it) than was, say, reparations.'

It recalled to Smuts the matter of reparations.

## Chapter XXIII

### 'BY LAND, BY SEA, AND FROM THE AIR'

#### I

'Reparations', it may be remembered, was the word Woodrow Wilson preferred to the word 'indemnities'. While Smuts was pleading with Mr. Lloyd George and the peace delegates generally that, not only for Germany's, but the world's sake, the impossible should not be exacted of Germany, committees and lawyers in France, America and England were investigating the not impossible; they were analysing that condition derived by the Allies from Wilson's Fourteen Points which said invaded territories must be restored as well as evacuated and freed; the crucial matter was to be considered of determining Germany's material due to her conquerors.

The Allied Governments had wisely felt at the time that 'no doubt ought to be allowed to exist' concerning this provision about the restoring of the invaded territories, and they had therefore laid down their precise interpretation:

'By it they understand that compensation will be made by Germany for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property by land, by sea and from the air.'

So now the lawyers were interpreting the interpretation.

#### 2

The war was barely over, the delegates were not yet in Paris, the word used was 'still indemnities and not repara-

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tions, when an English committee, under the leadership of Mr. Hughes, the Prime Minister of Australia, and Lord Sumner, a Lord of Appeal, decided that damage to the civilian population of the Allies meant the cost of the war—the cost to the Allies of the whole war.

For since the cost of the war, they argued, must fall on the civilian population, who would eventually have to pay for everything, the damage the civilian population suffered was the cost of the war.

They brought this damage down to figures. It was not yet possible, they said, to assess the whole cost of the war, but the direct cost was known to be twenty-four thousand million pounds, and they saw no reason why the enemy powers should not, once normal conditions were restored, be able to pay the annual interest on such a sum: namely, twelve hundred million pounds.

Also the compulsion to pay this interest would keep the Germans from creating an army and wealth for another war, and it would be a lesson to the world in general against the making of war.

The British found, when they came to Paris, that the French had even clearer ideas about what the Germans should and could pay.

The French Committee thought damage to the civilian population included:

Allowances, bonuses or pensions to the widows and orphans of soldiers; to maimed or invalided soldiers; to the civilian victims of bombardments, factory explosions and accidents in war factories; to prisoners of war (civilian or military), shot, interned or maltreated by the enemy. It included destruction or deterioration of property through bombardment, occupation by troops, defensive or offensive arrangements, torpedoes, submarines, mines. Objects of such destruction or deterioration were everything in



public, business or private life—from forests and canals, through shops and cargoes, to drawings and documents—in short, everything. The principle they went on was that Germany had to restore the world to the condition it had been in before she made the war. And for all this they thought twenty-four thousand million pounds too little, and the figure they suggested was forty thousand million pounds. The lesser countries brought forward their losses that would have to be met out of this forty thousand million pounds. They did not doubt that Germany would be able to pay this sum. Had not the Germans themselves been sure, after the war of 1870, that the French would not be able to pay the amount demanded of them; and, when they did actually pay it, was it not, in later years, Bismarck’s one regret that he had not asked for more? . . .

The Americans were moderate. They suggested payment of about a thousand million pounds in two years and the annual interest over thirty-five years on a capital of eleven or twelve thousand million pounds.

Apart from the decisions of the committees, French and English lawyers thought allowances and pensions should be included in reparations; and American lawyers thought they should not.

There was a general understanding that if allowances and pensions were not included, the invaded territories of the Continent would get most of the reparations, and England, that had borne the chief cost of the war, yet suffered no invasion, extremely little. Allowances and pensions were therefore England’s only hope of fair compensation, the only way of evading the blunder made by Wilson in demanding restoration for depleted countries, but not for depleted finances. This blunder the English (nominally the Allies) had seen, intercepted, yet not overcome. To evade it, they had subjected their acceptance of peace to the un-

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derstanding that ‘invaded territories must be restored’ meant ‘compensation . . . for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property . . . by land, by sea and from the air’—that, in fact, ‘invaded territories’ included uninvaded territories. They had, in other words, substituted for Wilson’s condition an entirely new condition.

Yet, even now, if ‘all damage’ failed to include allowances and pensions, England would not receive her due. And what the Americans could not understand was why the French lawyers should agree that damages included allowances and pensions, since this interpretation was almost entirely for England’s benefit—perhaps even at the expense of France.

They looked for a motive. It could not enter their minds that the French opinion might simply be honest.

What the English dreaded was facing their people with the unjust and calamitous result that could only be avoided if reparations included allowances and pensions—were *made* to include them, even as, in the terms to Germany, invaded territories had been made to include uninvaded territories.

### 3

Imagine the position if England that had lost so heavily in men and money, yet so little on land, were to see almost all the compensation go to the Continent at England’s expense. A month after the Armistice Mr. Lloyd George had vowed at Bristol that ‘those who started it (the war) must pay to the uttermost farthing and we shall search their pockets for it’. Imagine the delegates returning from the Peace Conference with a tale of a few mandates to Britain, and to France not only mandates in Africa and the East, not only Alsace-Lorraine, but even most of the actual cash; telling the people of Britain that not all their diplomacy had been able to avert this monstrous result, and that it only re-

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maintained for them to face the prospect of an unrelieved, unendurable taxation for ever. Imagine the outcry!

It was, after all, arguable (some of the greatest English lawyers did argue it—it was really the most logical of arguments) that damage to the civilian population meant the complete extent of the loss and injury caused by the war. The French Committee had set down in detail this loss and injury, and allocated to Germany the godlike task of restoring the world to its pre-war condition. The only people completely against the idea were the Americans—not Wilson himself, whose mind was open, but his advisers.

As, from the beginning of the war, it had generally been accepted that Wilson was the lawgiver, the peacemaker, the arbiter; as America was now the great creditor nation, the only nation with the money—the ultimate ruling about reparations lay with Wilson.

### 4

On March 26th, Smuts wrote to Mr. Lloyd George: ‘In particular a large indemnity could only be asked on our promise to supply raw materials to restart German industry. While such a promise would probably induce the liability to pay a very large sum, payment could only be made if German industry is put in a position to supply goods. . . .’

And compete with English industry!

On March 29th he wrote to Mr. Lloyd George that in the Peace Treaty no amount in reparations was specified, but Germany should make good all direct damage and loss inflicted on civilians whatever that amounted to. He added that the Treaty could lay down a scale, increasing with the years, of repayment, with power to vary those amounts either up or down according to Germany’s capacity in any particular year.

All *direct* damage. And what did that mean?

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He was asked to give his answer in more precise terms—to write, with the other lawyers among the delegates, what was called a legal opinion concerning this thing which fell under no law, ancient or modern, national or international, for which there was no sort of precedent, and concerning which there was this feeling, this apprehension, this *conditioning* among his British colleagues.

One might say that Smuts should not have allowed himself to be influenced by a general feeling or apprehension; should not have succumbed to any conditioning; should not have thought beyond the rigid confines of his brief.

What Smuts saw confronting him was not a form of words, but a question of right or wrong. There is in Smuts a belief in his own conception of justice which has the power to override even that law he thinks the basis of every aspect of the universe. He demonstrated this when, in 1914, he chose peremptorily to deport nine dangerous syndicalists because there was no legal way of punishing them. Now here was a problem that had to have a certain answer to bring about justice, and to account for this answer a theory was needed. In the midst of all the other memorandums he was writing all the time about everything, Smuts set himself to supply—to evolve—this theory. . . .

Four years later he was taunted by the Nationalists in the Union Parliament about his opinion on reparations and he gave this explanation:

‘What was my attitude on the question of policy, whether an extortionate sum should be claimed from Germany? The majority of the reparation commission favoured the utmost possible damage from Germany. There were some who held that Germany could and should pay the whole war damage of all the Allies . . . and that President Wilson’s terms were no bar to such a claim. Others were somewhat less extreme in their claims, but even their ideas seemed to

me to go far beyond what was either possible or expedient. Both in the British Empire delegation and out of it in other sections I used every scrap of such influence as I possessed to get the reparation figures down to a fair moderate fixed amount. It is perfectly well known to those who took part in the conference that I was probably the most active protagonist at the conference for fixing the reparation amount at a reasonably low figure. I incurred odium and obloquy at the conference because of the energy with which I pushed my view on the dangerous subject. The view I consistently advocated was that, whether pensions were or were not included—indeed, whatsoever items or valuations of damage were accepted as between the Allies—as regards the Germans the amount due should be definitely fixed in the Peace Treaty, and that it should be such as Germany could reasonably pay without dislocation of her economic life. Unfortunately this view did not prevail. The actual result of the reparation procedure has been brought about against my advice, and in the teeth of my strongest opposition, and I disclaim all responsibility for the result. . . .’

Everything Smuts told the Union Parliament was indisputable, except that he had no responsibility for the result. He might have written his reparation opinion—he did—under the compulsion of what he considered justice; he might not have foreseen what use would be made of that opinion; it was supported, as he said, by many of the greatest lawyers of the conference: ‘the late Lord Chancellor, the present Lord Chief Justice, Lord Sumner, the distinguished Lord of Appeal, the present Attorney General, also many of the greatest continental lawyers’; and yet, just precisely he himself among all these lawyers had responsibility for the result. Because what happened was that Woodrow Wilson, already entranced by their community of thought concerning the League of Nations, and seeing in Smuts some-

thing come from a world that was not this savage Europe—something different and dependable—suddenly decided to throw over the opinions of all those intolerable lawyers and rely on Smuts’ word alone. After Smuts gave his opinion, Wilson’s advisers came to him saying there was not a single lawyer in the American Delegation who could bring himself to agree with Smuts. All the logic, they said, was against it. ‘Logic! Logic!’ exclaimed the President, ‘I don’t give a damn for logic. I am going to include pensions.’

For in spite of his protests on Germany’s behalf; convinced that Germany could and should pay no more than ‘a reasonably low figure’; declaring this to Mr. Lloyd George and the conference and whoever had the power to do anything about it; never knowing his opinion was to have particular—indeed, final—significance, what Smuts did in his reparation opinion was to include allowances and pensions.

5

He says to-day that if he had known so much would hang on his individual decision, that he was to have ‘the responsibility, as it were, of an umpire’, he would not so readily have given it. Nor, he adds, would he have given it if he had known the use to which the French would put it.

‘I assumed at the time’, he says, ‘that I was only one of the many who were giving opinions about reparations. The opinions were being given, one might say, in national blocks. I talked the matter over with Sumner, who was for including the whole cost of the war. There was the feeling among the more moderate delegates that Germany would pay no more than a fixed amount; that what faced us now was only a matter of distributing this fixed amount; and that “civilian damages” could be interpreted either narrowly or widely, but a narrow interpretation would give France and Belgium almost everything and England almost no-

thing and a wide interpretation would result in a just award.

‘I don’t know how you could interpret the words with legal exactitude. When, under conditions that made every man possible a soldier, was a soldier merely a soldier, suffering damage merely as a soldier? I have been asked why Wilson, the originator of the reparation idea, could not have decided the matter for himself. But then Wilson was no longer in it, because (as I said in my Opinion) another formula had been substituted for his formula—the Allies’ reservation. It was the Allies’ reservation, to which Wilson had agreed and which the Germans had accepted, that now formed the basis of the peace contract. The Allies (in effect, the English) had made this reservation in order to bring about a certain result. Presumably they knew their own intention—what they meant this result to be. But if their reservation were not read in a particular way, they were in a mess. It had to be interpreted widely. . . .’

## Chapter XXIV

### SMUTS ON REPARATIONS

#### I

Smuts began his reparation opinion by saying that the extent to which reparations could be claimed from Germany depended on the meaning of the last reservation made by the Allies in their note to Wilson of November 1918—the reservation that by ‘invaded territories must be restored’ they understood ‘compensation will be made by Germany for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property by the aggression of Germany by land, by sea and from the air.’

In this reservation, he said, a distinction had to be made between the quotation from the President which referred to the evacuation and restoration of the invaded territories, and the implication the Allies found in that quotation, and which they enunciated as a principle of general applicability. ‘By accepting this comprehensive principle (as the German Government did) they acknowledged their liability to compensation for all damage to the civilian population or their property wherever or however arising, so long as it was the result of German aggression. The President’s limitation to restoration of the invaded territories was clearly abandoned.’

He proceeded to define the crucial words ‘civilian population’ by taking as an illustration a shopkeeper in a village



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in the North of France who had lost his shop through enemy bombardment and was himself badly wounded. This man, said Smuts, 'would be entitled as one of the civilian population to compensation for loss of property and personal disablement. He subsequently recovered completely, was called up for military service, and after being badly wounded and spending some time in the hospitals was discharged as permanently unfit. The expense he was to the French Government during his period as a soldier (his pay and maintenance, his uniform, rifle, ammunition, his keep in hospital, etc.) was not damage to a civilian, but military loss to his government, and it is therefore arguable that the French Government cannot recover compensation for such expense under the above reservation. His wife, however, was during this period deprived of her breadwinner, and she, therefore, suffered damage as a member of the civilian population for which she was entitled to compensation. In other words, the separation allowance paid to her and her children during this period by the French Government would have to be made good by the German Government, as the compensation which the allowances represent was their liability. After the soldier's discharge as unfit, he rejoins the civilian population, and as, for the future, he cannot (in whole or in part) earn his own livelihood, he is suffering damage as a member of the civilian population, for which the German Government are again liable to make compensation. In other words, the pension for disablement which he draws from the French Government is really a liability of the German Government which they must, under the above reservation, make good to the French Government. It could not be argued that as he was disabled while a soldier he does not suffer damage as a civilian after his discharge if he is unfit to do his ordinary work. He does literally suffer as a civilian after his discharge, and his pen-

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sion is intended to make good this damage, and is therefore a liability of the French Government. If he had been killed on active service, his wife as a civilian would have been totally deprived of her breadwinner, and would be entitled to compensation. In other words, the pension she would draw from the French Government would really be a liability of the German Government under the above reservation, and would have to be made good by them to the French Government.

‘The plain, commonsense construction of the reservation therefore leads to the conclusion that, while direct war expenditure (such as the pay and equipment of soldiers, the cost of rifles, guns and ordnance and all similar expenditure) could perhaps not be recovered from the Germans, yet disablement pensions to discharged soldiers, or pensions to widows and orphans, or separation allowances paid to their wives and children during the period of their military service, are all items representing compensation to members of the civilian population for damage sustained by them, for which the German Government are liable. What was spent by the Allied Governments on the soldier himself, or on the mechanical appliances of war, might perhaps not be recoverable from the German Government under the reservation, as not being in any plain and direct sense damage done to the civilian population. But what was or is spent on the citizen before he became a soldier, or at any rate on his family, represents compensation for damage done to civilians and must be made good by the German Government under any fair interpretation of the above reservations. This includes all war pensions and separation allowances, which the German Government are liable to make good, in addition to reparation and compensation for all damage done to property of the Allied peoples.’

It will be seen that, in the end, Smuts has to invoke, in

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lieu of the legal theory or precedent which did not exist, 'plain, commonsense construction.'

But does not 'plain, commonsense construction' suggest that Germany had to pay such compensation to the civilian population of the Allies as they could not, by existing law, recover from their own governments—that is, generally speaking, the injury, through German aggression, not to their persons but their property?

Perhaps, after all, it would have been better if Smuts, instead of compromising as is his normally successful habit, had said, like Wilson, 'Logic! Logic! I don't give a damn for logic! I am going to include pensions!' He might not then, for the rest of his days, have found himself in the false position from which, despite all his work against reparations, he has never been able to escape.

### 2

Not that he admits his opinion was wrong. Able as Smuts is to put himself above most human weaknesses—even, perhaps, because it is his principle not to repine—he hates to admit what he hates to admit. He says he regrets his opinion only because 'the French used it to swell the reparation amount to fantastic proportions, and it became a vehicle of injustice to Germany—one of those things that are responsible for the Germany of to-day. . . .'

But one might think, from the note of increased pain with which he henceforth protested against oppression of the vanquished, that his opinion hurt himself more than anyone else. His journey to Austria and Hungary the very day after writing it—the sight of those miserable capitals Mr. Nicolson describes, the starving countries where Smuts could not bear to eat more than a soldier's rations himself—must have added to his anguish in the most ironic, dramatic

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way. When Mr. Lloyd George asked him, next month, to serve on a Commission on Austrian Reparations he answered: 'I have read the minutes of the Supreme Council meeting at which the subject was generally discussed, and especially the question of demanding reparation from the new state carved out of Austria.

'While I am most willing, and indeed anxious, to help with the work, I do not think . . . that my going on the commission will serve any useful purpose, and my opposition to what seems to be your policy will only waste time where speed is right. For the imposition of reparation on a broken, bankrupt, economically impossible state like Austria, or a new friendly allied state like Czecho-Slovakia, which rendered great services to our cause, especially in Russia, seems to be a hopeless policy, which could only lead to the most mischievous results. I am against payment of all reparation of these countries for damage done by the dead and dismembered Austro-Hungarian Empire. And if it is (as it appears) your policy to exact reparation in these cases . . . I hope you will excuse me from serving on the commission. . . .'

It would seem, in fact, as if Smuts had had enough of awarding reparations.

Mr. Lloyd George protested that Smuts had misunderstood him. His idea was actually that 'the enemy states of Austria and Hungary should . . . pay reparation to the extent of their capacity to pay, once the economic situation in Central Europe has begun to improve. As to the states that are now our Allies, I am not concerned that they should pay reparation. What I do contend, however, is that these new states should bear according to their capacity a share of what it has cost to liberate them. If I read your letter aright, you mean to say that Great Britain or South Africa is to bear a crushing loan of debt for the next thirty or forty

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years, while Czecho-Slovakia, Jugo-Slavia and the States which have been liberated by our arms, to say nothing of Austria and Hungary, are to carry no war debt at all. I must say that I cannot see how I am to justify to my own parliament that after, say, three or four years' time, when Europe has once more recovered its productive ability, the farmers and manufacturers of Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, while burdened with the tremendous liability of the cost of the war, are to compete against the farmers and manufacturers of these new states, many of them highly developed, but freed by our deliberate action from any equivalent burden. If I did that, without doing my best to secure an equitable distribution of the costs of the war, I think my fellow countrymen would justly complain that I had sacrificed their future interests. After all, the cost of the burden of liberating Europe, including these small nations, many of whom, though absolutely against their will, fought in the enemy ranks, has been mainly carried by the Allied peoples. I think it is just, and I think it is wise, that we should ask these people to bear a proportionate share of the cost of liberating them. By all means arrange that this should not be called "reparation". I perfectly understand their objection to being called on to pay reparation, because it looks as if they were willing partners in German Imperialism. But I do think, as I said to Dr. Benes yesterday, that not only have we the right to ask them to share in the burden of winning their own freedom, but that they ought voluntarily to assume a proportion of the common burden equivalent to that borne by the nations which have come to their aid.

'I should like to know whether, in view of this decision, you can see your way to sit upon a committee, whose purpose it is to ascertain what share of the burden should be equitably carried by these states and how it should be apportioned.'

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Smuts couldn't. Whatever one called this liability of the new states—whether one called it 'liberation payment' or 'reparation payment'—he could not see his way to sitting upon the committee suggested by Mr. Lloyd George, and he refused. 'Thank you very much', he answered, 'for your letter of yesterday which makes your position quite clear. I feel that, however much we may affirm abstract principles of liability in respect of the countries carved from the former Austrian Empire, we shall in effect get from them just nothing but trouble, friction and economic floundering, and we are fast shaping a policy which must drive all afflicted Central Europe into league with Germany against us in future.

'If my advice had been followed after my visit to Austria Hungary, and an economic conference of all these states had been called (as they were unanimously asking for), we would to-day have had a scheme, evolved on the spot, on which a statesman-like basis could have been laid for the economic co-operation and reconstruction of these countries. A Customs Union of these states might have emerged and part of the proceeds of their external tariff might have gone into a reparation fund. Now we are working absolutely in the dark, with the risk that any scheme adopted in a hurry may prove nugatory, except as a source of friction and economic paralysis.

'It is clear to me from the tenor of your letter that our representatives on this commission should be the same as our representatives on the Supreme Economic Council, who have the facts as regards those countries before them, and who are actually working with the representatives of other Powers at a scheme for the rehabilitation of credit in these countries. I would therefore suggest that Lord Robert Cecil should be substituted for me on this commission. However willing to help, I fear I shall be the wrong man

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on this commission. I come to this conclusion with great regret....'

He had generally the sense, in these days, of being the wrong man for the purposes of these men here in Paris—having just once, and so unhappily, been their right man.

He had hardly, indeed, written that reparation opinion when it became his passion to undo it.

## Chapter XXV

### 'FORGIVE MY IMPORTUNITY'

#### I

He spoke and wrote incessantly about the evils of the Peace Treaty. From his immediate associates he went to the Peace Conference, and from the Peace Conference to Mr. Lloyd George personally, and from Mr. Lloyd George to Woodrow Wilson, round and round and over and over, until he felt he was becoming wearisome, and had to break his pride to continue.

He told the British Empire Delegation in the middle of May that some of the main provisions of the Treaty were debatable in policy, and impracticable of execution. 'They are such that I personally would hesitate before I subscribed my name to them, even if the Germans are willing to submit under duress. . . . If the Germans are prepared to swallow this Treaty, I still consider its provisions such as to make future peace and goodwill in Europe unlikely; an international atmosphere will be created which will make the beneficent operation of the League of Nations impossible; the fires will be kept burning and the pot be kept boiling until it again boils over, either in a new war, or in the breakdown of the European system under the onslaught of social and industrial anarchy. . . . I would urge . . . even at this twelfth hour, and even at the risk of our losing some diplomatic credit, that we remove the most objectionable features from the Peace Treaty.' Unfortunately the wrong



procedure we have hitherto followed in the dramatic publication and presentation to the Germans makes the course I propose very difficult for us and almost humiliating. But that surely is a minor consideration where so much is at stake for the world. . . .

‘My proposal is as follows: Germans have been invited to state their objections to provisions of the Draft Treaty. They are now pouring forth a great volume of ponderous notes embodying their views. These views we should be prepared to consider fairly and sincerely on their merits, and where we find a good case made out against our draft we should be prepared to modify our proposals.’

The views, he added, of those members of the British Empire Delegation who, like himself, had not seen the most important provisions of the Draft Treaty until they were settled by the Supreme Council and on the point of being communicated to the world—their views too might be given an opportunity of expression.

He explained to Mr. Lloyd George the clauses in the Peace Treaty which he thought should be revised: the Occupation, Reparation and Punishment Clauses; the matters of the Saar Basin and Germany’s Eastern Frontier; the Military and Air Clauses; the clauses concerning International Rivers and Railways. Such things as he and Botha, out of their own experience of other days, always referred to as pinpricks—‘comparatively unimportant provisions which serve no useful purpose, but must be unnecessarily galling and wounding to the feelings of a defeated enemy.’

He wrote the following letter (also about the middle of May) to both Mr. Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson:

‘The more I have studied the Peace Treaty as a whole, the more I dislike it. The combined effect of the territorial and reparation clauses is to make it practically impossible for Germany to carry out the provisions of the Treaty. And

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then the Occupation Clauses come in to plant the French on the Rhine indefinitely, even beyond the already far too long period of fifteen years, under an undefined régime of martial law. East and West, blocks of Germans are put under their historic enemies. Under this Treaty Europe will know no peace; and the undertaking to defend Europe against aggression may at any time bring the British Empire also into the fire.

‘I am grieved beyond words that such should be the result of our statesmanship. I admit it was hard to appear to fight for the German cause with our other Allies, especially with devastated France. But now that the Germans can state their own case, I pray you will use your power and influence to make the final Treaty a more moderate and reasonable document. I fear there may be a temptation to wave aside objections which will be urged by the Germans, but which will be supported by the good sense and conscience of most moderate people. I hope this temptation will be resisted and that drastic revision will be possible even at the eleventh hour.

‘Forgive my importunity. . . .’

## 2

Woodrow Wilson answered him according to the feelings with which he had come to Europe and with which he returned to America—his persistent conviction:

‘My dear Gen. Smuts,

‘No apology was needed for your earnest letter of the fourteenth. The Treaty is undoubtedly very severe indeed. I have of course had an opportunity to go over each part of it, as it was adopted, and I must say that though in many respects harsh, I do not think that it is on the whole unjust in the circumstances, much as I should have liked to

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have certain features altered. I am in entire agreement with you that real consideration should be given to the objections that are being raised against it by the Germans, and I think I find a growing inclination to treat their representations fairly. As it happens, they have so far addressed their criticisms only to points which are substantially sound.

‘I feel the terrible responsibility of the whole business, but inevitably my thought goes back to the very great offence against civilisation which the German State committed and the necessity for making it evident once and for all that such things can lead only to the most severe punishment.

‘I am sure you know the spirit in which I say these things, and that I need not assure you that I am just as anxious to be just to the Germans as to be just to anyone else.

‘With unaffected thanks for your letter,

‘Cordially and sincerely yours,

Woodrow Wilson.’

The front Smuts shows the world is his mask of pride. It is his pride that causes this reserve a generation of his chroniclers have noted, that prohibits him from acknowledging his mistakes, from explaining his motives, from answering his critics, from resenting his injuries. He dismissed his pride, he risked a rebuff, to recall to Woodrow Wilson what he considered his obligations.

‘Even at the risk of wearying you I venture to address you once more.

‘The German answer to our draft Peace Terms seems to me to strike the fundamental note which is most dangerous to us and which we are bound to consider most carefully. They say in effect that we are under solemn obligation to them to make a Wilson Peace, a peace in accordance with your Fourteen Points and other Principles enunciated in 1918. To my mind there is absolutely no doubt that this is

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so. Subject to the two reservations made by the Allies before the Armistice, we are bound to make a peace within the four corners of your Points and Principles, and any provisions of the Treaty which go either *contrary* to or *beyond* their general scope and intent would constitute a breach of agreement.

‘This seems to my mind quite clear and the question remains whether there are any such provisions. If there are, then our position is indeed serious, as I understand it. This war began with a breach of a solemn international undertaking, and it has been one of the most important war aims to vindicate international law and the sanctity of international engagements. If the Allies end the war by following the example of Germany at the beginning, and also confront the world with a “scrap of paper”, the discredit on us will be so great that I shudder to think of its ultimate effect on public opinion. We would indeed have done a worse wrong than Germany because of all that has happened since August 1914, and the fierce light which has been concentrated on this very point.

‘The question therefore becomes important whether there are important provisions of the Treaty which conflict with, or are not covered by, or go beyond your Points and Principles. I notice a tendency to put the whole responsibility for deciding this question on you, and to say that after all President Wilson agrees to the Treaty, and he knows best what the Points and Principles mean. This is most unfair to you, and I think we should all give the gravest consideration to the question whether our Peace Treaty is within the four corners of your speeches of 1918.

‘Frankly, I do not think this is so, and I think the Germans make out a good case in regard to a number of provisions. All the onesided provisions, which exclude reciprocity or equality, all the pinpricks with which the Treaty

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teems, seem to me to be both against the letter and the spirit of your Points. I cannot find anything in the Points or the Principles which would cover, for instance, the one-sided internationalisation of German rivers and the utterly bad and onesided administration arranged in respect of them. Reparation by way of coal cannot cover the arrangements made in respect of the Saar Basin and its people. I even doubt whether the occupation of the Rhine for fifteen years could be squared either with the letter or the spirit of your Points and Principles. And there are many other points to which I shall not refer, but which no doubt your advisers will consider.

'There will be a terrible disillusionment if the peoples come to think that we are not concluding a Wilson Peace, that we are not keeping our promises to the world or faith with the public. But if, in so doing, we appear also to break a formal agreement deliberately entered into (as I think we do), we shall be overwhelmed with the gravest discredit, and this Peace may become an even greater disaster to the world than the war was.

'Forgive me for troubling you with this matter, but I believe it goes to the root of the whole case. . . .'

Wilson assured Smuts, as before, that no apologies were needed for his letter. 'I appreciate the gravity of the situation and thank you for your letter. I am glad to say that I find my colleagues of the smaller council quite willing to re-study some of the conclusions formerly reached, and I hope that the coming week may be fruitful of at least some important decisions.'

Smuts intensified his lone attack on the Peace Treaty.

### 3

It was an impossible document, he said at a meeting of the British Empire Delegation, and to sign it would be a

real disaster not only for the British Empire but for the world. The Germans were right in holding that ‘the Allies were under an agreement to make a peace of a certain kind—a Wilson peace.’ He repeated to them the warning he had given Wilson against the war being ended, as it was begun, with a scrap of paper and the lie given to the Allies’ war aims and policy. It was not, he said, a matter of form or technical question—it was a matter of vital substance. The Treaty bristled with provisions outside the Fourteen Points and inconsistent with the Fourteen Points.

Nor were they repudiating only the declarations, accepted by everyone, of Wilson. The British people themselves had given pledges concerning their war aims. Mr. Lloyd George had made them public in January of 1918 and reaffirmed them in September of 1918. ‘For myself,’ said Smuts, ‘I have always looked upon these declarations as bedrock, and as governing any peace treaty which would be made at the end of the war.’

Apart even from this matter of agreements and declared policies, ‘a consideration of the document on its merits shows it will make a bad peace. It is not just and it cannot be durable. Many of the terms are impossible to carry out. They will produce political and economic chaos in Europe for a generation and in the long run it will be the British Empire that will have to pay the penalty. . . . This Treaty has been called an English peace, but it is nothing of the sort. The military occupation of a large part of industrial Germany for fifteen years is indefensible from every point of view. . . . The roots of war are in the document, and it will be no use calling it unprovoked aggression when it comes. You cannot make a fire under such a pot without its boiling over. When aggression comes, it will be called unprovoked, and then, under the guaranteeing agreement, the British Empire will be called upon to jump in.’

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He asked for removal of those provisions of the Treaty that were not covered by the Wilson formulas; for the limitation, as to numbers, locale and authority, of the army of occupation; for the modification of the Eastern European provisions (‘Poland is an historic failure, and will always be a failure, and in this Treaty we are trying to reverse the verdict of history’); for the naming of a fixed sum in Reparations (say five thousand millions) to be divided among the Allies now, so that later there might be no disputes; for a revision of the Reparation Commission where they constituted a breach of German sovereignty; for the elimination of ‘pinpricks’; for the right of Germany to become a member of the League immediately upon the signing of the Treaty. . . .

‘As the document stands at present,’ he ended his criticism of the Peace Treaty, ‘I cannot vote for it and I doubt if I can sign it.’

There were letters to the same effect from Botha to Mr. Lloyd George. The drafts are in Smuts’ handwriting.

## 4

It seemed to Smuts that a number of delegates were, if not strongly in support of his views, at least sympathetic to them. He was outraged to find that, according to the Draft Resolution, the Delegation were unanimous on all proposals submitted by Mr. Lloyd George at the end of the meeting. In actual fact, he pointed out to Mr. Lloyd George, the unanimity of the delegates had to do only with a certain threat to Clemenceau and ‘a certain limited line of action’. But the unanimity on this particular point did not, he wrote, convey the general feeling of the meeting, and he challenged the accuracy of the Draft Resolution.

‘In any case, so far as I myself am concerned,’ he added, ‘I wish to make it quite clear that I cannot agree to any-

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thing less than the very drastic course I proposed at the beginning of the meeting—viz., that the Peace Treaty should be recast and transformed so as to be more in accord with our solemn undertakings, our public declarations and the requirements of a reasonable and practicable policy. . . .

‘This programme I must stand by because of the view I take of the situation now facing us—grave and fateful beyond words for the British Empire and the whole world. I very much fear that we are endeavouring to make a Peace of the twentieth century which might have been in place in the seventeenth or eighteenth, but which is entirely opposed to the spirit of the times, and may well prove disastrous from every point of view.’

Mr. Lloyd George was no less harassed than Smuts, no less capable of indignation, no less sure of his ground, no less energetic in argument, no less impulsive and ruthless.

He hit back.



## Chapter XXVI

### MR. LLOYD GEORGE HITS BACK

#### I

**I**t will be remembered that, right at the beginning of the Peace Conference, Smuts had moved the following resolution:

‘Having regard to the record of German administration in the colonies formerly belonging to the German Empire, and to the menace which the possession by Germany of submarine bases in many parts of the world would necessarily constitute to the freedom and security of all nations, the Allied and Associated Powers are agreed that in no circumstances should any of the German colonies be restored to Germany.’

For if all the delegates in Paris were there, not only to make peace, but to get revenge, security, recompense or loot, there was something also that Smuts wanted—something that, as it happens, precisely his own League Plan made it impossible for him (that is, the Union of South Africa) to have.

Not the least of the things devastated by the Peace was Smuts’ League Plan. Although the Covenant of the League is so greatly dependent on Smuts’ League, although over the whole Covenant there is his spoor, that spoor is sometimes almost obliterated. Of his great mandate scheme, for instance, his heir-of-the-empires plan for breakdown Europe, his revelation to Wilson, the very heart of his

thought—of all this nothing remained except its fragmentary application (successful, as it happened) to a few odd bits of Europe, and its full application to the conquered territories. Among the conquered territories was Smuts' desire—Smuts' and Botha's own particular conquest, German South-West Africa. Woodrow Wilson could see no distinction between the colonies captured in Africa and the colonies captured anywhere else. What fitted Mesopotamia or Palestine fitted, he justly held, German East Africa or German South-West Africa.

The Nationalists in South Africa were not the people to pass by an opportunity. Botha and Smuts, they said, had better not 'show themselves before the public of South Africa without German South-West in their pocket as a new portion of the Union, since from the beginning of the war it was their aim to conquer German South-West and annex it to the Union—against the desire of a great part of the population and with 'the spilling of the blood of brothers' as a result and a severing of Afrikaners into two camps.

'And what has now happened? According to the principle set forth and driven through by President Wilson, the territory of the Union will not be enlarged by that of German South-West—the conquered territory will not become an integral part of the Union, but will be assigned to the Union for government at the mandate of the League of Nations under the supervision of the League. Generals Botha and Smuts will return to the Union with empty hands. German South-West, whose government costs about eight hundred thousand pounds a year, they will still be able to govern, but nothing more. All the fine representations, and the assertions of General Smuts about holding what we have—all are gone by the board. . . .'

In fact, it was just as difficult for Smuts to return to his

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people without something concrete in the shape of revenge, security, recompense or loot as for the delegates of other peoples.

Now, replying to Smuts' accusation about the Draft Resolution and his threat to refuse to sign the Peace Treaty, Mr. Lloyd George took the opportunity to recall to Smuts, not only his Reparations Opinion, but also this business of German South-West and East Africa.

### 2

'Dear General Smuts,' he wrote,

'I am afraid I cannot accept your account of the meeting yesterday. It is quite true that the members were unanimously against standing "pat" on the Treaty, as at present drafted, and were in favour of making concessions. It is true that two members, notably yourself, were in favour of making such far-reaching concessions as to amount to general reconstruction of the Treaty. I do not suggest, and I do not think the minutes suggest, that the proposals which I made at the end went as far as you and some others could have wished. They represent a proposal which I put forward after Mr. Balfour had dealt with the criticism of the Treaty made during the morning meeting. This proposal received the unanimous support of my colleagues, who authorised me to press it upon the Allies with the whole authority of the British Empire. It was considered for a long time; no single member protested against it; no counter-proposal was submitted as an alternative to meet it; you made no remarks upon it yourself, though you had the amplest opportunity. Whatever, therefore, you may have thought of the general sense of the meeting in the morning, I think I am entitled to regard the resolution as representing the general sense at the end of our deliberations. Further, I must make it clear that I never regarded

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myself as entitled to convey any sort of "threat" to M. Clemenceau with the object of securing amendments to the Peace Treaty. I was only authorised to convey to him the modifications without which the British Empire Delegates were of the opinion they could not authorise the British army and navy to renew hostilities in order to enforce acceptance of the terms of peace.

'In regard to the counter-proposals which you now put forward, I should like to be a little clearer as to your views. I should like you to specify the provisions which are not in accordance with the Wilson formulas, and how they should be modified in order to accord with these formulas. Am I to understand that it is your proposal to depart from the principle of nationality, and leave great numbers of down-trodden Poles under Prussian rule? That is the only way in which the eastern boundaries of Germany can be thoroughly revised. I should like to know also what sum you mean by "reasonable though high amount of reparation", how you propose that this sum should be collected, as you are against both the Reparation Commission and Occupation; and how you would induce the Allies to accept the distribution which you propose. Are you prepared to forgo the claims for pensions and so confine compensation to material damage? The Germans repeatedly request the return of the colonies. Are you prepared to allow German South-West Africa and German East Africa to be returned to Germany as a concession which might induce them to sign the peace? Are you similarly prepared to make concessions in regard to German businesses in South Africa, which the Germans also complain of?

Ever sincerely,

D. Lloyd George.'

Mr. Lloyd George's letter was written on June 3rd. Smuts replied next day. His letter has an air of still solemn-

nity. He ignored the taunts. He answered the question about pensions as if pensions were no peculiar concern of his. What he said on the subject of German colonies might be read as one chose. He reiterated his fears, exhortations and prophecies.

'Dear Prime Minister,' he replied,

'I am sorry to involve you in any correspondence at a time like this, when you are preoccupied with the gravest difficulties. I write you in no polemical sense, but mainly to stress the fact that in the discussion on Sunday preceding your proposals several of your colleagues went a good deal beyond these proposals and that they fell so far short of what I thought necessary by way of amendments to the Treaty that they left my views unaffected. The divergence was so great that I thought it unnecessary, as indeed it was, to trespass further on the time and patience of the meeting.

'I reply now simply to answer the queries you put me. You ask about the application of the Wilson formulas. Whatever view one holds of these formulas, I should say that our proposed disposal of the Saar Basin, of Danzig, and of Memel violates them. They are indisputably German territories with German populations, which we have no right under these formulas to tear off Germany, either permanently or temporarily, without their approval. They have as much right to choose to remain under Germany as downtrodden Poles have to be reunited under Poland. And it is not necessary for the future Poland that there should be a free Danzig under Polish Suzerainty, any more than it is necessary to have a free Hamburg as an outlet for the future Czecho-Slovakia. The postponement of the plebiscite in the Saar Basin for fifteen years could only throw a sinister light on the intentions of France which we appear to back up. . . .

‘With regard to reparation, I consider the sum of five thousand million mentioned both by us and the Germans as reasonable though high, but I would not make the deductions from it that the Germans propose. This amount should now be apportioned by the Allies in respect of “restoration” and other claims, such as pensions. And for two reasons: In the first place, if this is not done the French (and Belgian) claims in respect of restoration would probably eat up everything and the British tax-payer will get no relief, and soon come to the conclusion that he has been deceived. And in the second place, the attempt in the next four years to beat down the French claims in detail will produce intense friction and bitterness. We shall end by being hated as much by the French as the Germans. Whatever the difficulty now, I think we should cut the Gordian knot and apportion a lump sum, say two thousand million, to restoration, and leave the rest as the amount divisible among the Allies in respect of the other claims, such as pensions. . . .

‘With regard to the German colonies, I do not for a moment contemplate their return to Germany as one of the concessions we should make. No doubt in future, when a new atmosphere has grown up, the German claims to colonial mandates will come to be viewed in a different light and that contingency has to be kept in view in whatever arrangements we make now. But please do not have the impression that I would be generous at the expense of others, so long as the Union gets South-West Africa. In this great business South-West Africa is as dust compared to the burdens now hanging over the civilised world. And that is how the matter will be viewed in the Union also. People who have been under the harrow have been in the greatest of all schools. And believe me the repercussion of this Peace Treaty in South Africa is going to be tremend-

ous. Events may soon prove that it has made the position of men like General Botha and myself very difficult, if not impossible. The strength of our position has been the belief of a large section of the Dutch population in the spirit of fair play and moderation as characteristic of British policy. Whether that belief will survive this Peace Treaty time alone can show, but the signs are ominous. And when the sense of fair play of people is outraged and their faith is destroyed and a stain is put on their conscience, they will not stop to look at a bit of desert. No, even as regards South Africa, I view the situation created by the Peace Treaty with the gravest concern. . . .

'Prime Minister! do not for a moment imagine that I write in any other but a most friendly and sympathetic spirit which I am sure you will not resent. Perhaps the main difference between us is that you are struggling in the water, while I shout advice from the shore! But I feel deeply this is no time to mince matters. When you are up against a position so terrible in its possibilities for good and evil, you can only do one thing, even if you fail utterly. And that is the right thing, the thing you can justify to your conscience and that of all other reasonable fair-minded people. This Treaty breathes a poisonous spirit of revenge, which may yet scorch the fair face—not of a corner of Europe, but of Europe.'

To the question of German South-West Smuts can give no better answer to-day than in 1919, and it will be seen that he could not give a good answer in 1919. He might call the business of German South-West 'dust compared to the burdens now hanging over the world', and say that once the Boers lost faith in the British they would not 'stop to look at a bit of desert'—he knew well there were reasons why German South-West had to come to South Africa, or, at least, under its mandate. If the country itself was a liabil-

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ity, German neighbourhood (as he himself had said) was a greater liability. If recalcitrant Boers repudiated him for accepting the spoils of war, they were still more likely (after the spilling of brothers' blood and the splitting of a nation) to repudiate him for rejecting such spoils. Even South Africa, so far away and apparently safe, so little suffering, by comparison, through the war, had a trace of the perturbations that maddened France. Whatever else Smuts wanted the Germans to keep, he did not, in his heart, want them to keep German South-West Africa. German South-West Africa might be, in his word, 'dust' (it mostly was), but he knew the Germans', and therefore the Boers', the Union's need for 'that bit of desert' on the borders of the Union.

Other Boers knew it.

As far back as 1909, at the time of the Union Convention, Steyn, last President of the Free State, had said: 'South Africa is still Naboth's vineyard. Germany means to take it. She wants our gold, our diamonds, our coal. Her plans are already made, her preparations even now nearly complete. Look at German-West—which should have been ours. Acquired by fraud and force, and held by brutal atrocities that no Christian people can think of without horror. . . . What else is German-West but a jumping-off place to attack us from the north while their ships destroy our ports. Look at their railways! They are military strategic railways—all directed at us. What is that country worth but as a base from which to attack us? . . . I have means which you have not of knowing what is going on. . . .'

Even pro-German Boers understood the position. Even General Hertzog, in Paris now to get something (like everybody else) out of the Peace Conference, knew it. He told Mr. Lloyd George that he was of German blood and that a third of the people of the Union had German blood,



## MR. LLOYD GEORGE HITS BACK

but it was the newspaper that spoke with his voice which warned Botha and Smuts not to 'show themselves before the public of South Africa without German South-West in their pocket as a new portion of the Union. . . .'

The actual something General Hertzog hoped—but perhaps not very confidently—to get out of the Peace Conference was the return of their old Republics to the Boers.

He came at the head of a deputation.

## Chapter XXVII

### BOERS IN PARIS

#### I

**R**ight from the beginning General Hertzog had been against the war. The war, he had said, was not South Africa's war; he did not know that it was a just war; South Africa ought not to antagonise a nation as powerful as the Germans.

So then his followers had broken out in rebellion rather than accompany the British against the Germans, and Smuts had been shot at and so vilified throughout the country that when he left for German East the words remained echoing behind him: 'I would like nothing better than to be out of this hell into which I have wandered, and in which I have lived for two years.'

Then questions had been asked in Parliament about his salary: Was England paying him and South Africa too? Should South Africa pay him at all seeing he was now ('our Empire-serving South African: fame heaped on shame') working for England?

General Hertzog had opposed a resolution concerning the glorious deeds of the British army and South Africa's son, and a member had cried out: 'The King!' And all but the Nationalists, the followers of General Hertzog, had stood up in Parliament and sung the national anthem. . . .

When, finally, the Nationalists came to hear about the British Note to the Allied Powers that said: 'No peace is

possible until reparation has been made for violated rights and liberties and the principle of nationalities and the independent existence of small states is recognised'—why then they logically wrote to England about their old republics: Could not the old Orange Free State and Transvaal Republics be restored to the Boers?

There was a British riot in the Johannesburg streets next time General Hertzog came in at the head of a commando of mounted burghers, and a motor car was burnt that someone thought belonged to him, and the windows of the National Party Club were broken. Even worse, there was no reply from England about the old republics. And when, after twelve months, a reply was urgently requested, this is what it said:

'The earlier communication was entitled "A statement as to the attitude of the National Party" towards a certain question. His Majesty's Government naturally assumed that they were not being asked for, and were not expected to offer, an expression of opinion in regard to the statement issued by a particular political party. Under the constitution which South Africa now enjoys . . . the Government and Parliament of the Union can alone be regarded by His Majesty's Government as authorised to speak on behalf of the people of South Africa. His Majesty's Government cannot, therefore, undertake to enter on a discussion with any body of private persons in the Union on the questions raised.'

The Boers have a quite subtle sense of humour, but not all of them enjoyed the admirable propriety of this letter, and perhaps some still do not. At any rate, when the nations of the world were all going to Paris to see what could be got out of the Peace, the Nationalists collected money and went too: that is to say they sent General Hertzog, and several of his followers who have since become important in South Africa, to go and see about the old republics.

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The man who first had the idea backed out. His name was Tielman Roos.

### 2

The deputation did not allow the episode to degenerate into tragedy.

To begin with, the mail steamers patriotically refused to take them on such a mission, and so the British Admiral in command of the Cape Naval Station hospitably offered them a warship. He said a British warship could be put to no better use than carrying people to ask for secession from Britain. Unfortunately the *Minerva's* accommodation was not very good, and so, after inspecting it, the Nationalists decided to sail in a Dutch ship.

The Dutch ship was not actually going to Europe, but it was going, at a sedate pace, to America. The delegates accordingly sailed for Paris *via* New York.

### 3

What General Hertzog told Mr. Lloyd George was that his delegation expressed the sentiments of the 'old' population of South Africa. ('Whole?' asked Mr. Lloyd George. 'Old,' said General Hertzog.) From the time of the British arrival in South Africa at the end of the eighteenth century this 'old' population had striven after the liberty and independence taught them by these very Englishmen, their conquerors. ('Their what?' asked Mr. Lloyd George. 'Their conquerors,' said General Hertzog.)

He illustrated Tennyson's

*Leisurely tapping a glossy boot,  
And curving a contumelious lip,  
Gorgonised me from head to foot  
With a stony British stare.*

## BOERS IN PARIS

This 'old' population (by 'old' he subtly implied the original and rightful owners of the country) could no longer go on in South Africa with the 'insufferable' British 'air of superiority in social and political life'; this manner of saying 'We are Britishers', as if no more need be said to entitle them to 'superior privileges'. . . . 'They assume to themselves the right of saying in South Africa what shall be felt and what shall be done. . . . They assume an attitude towards the older population which really amounts to tyranny at times. . . . Through the superiority of the British Government in its relations to South Africa our ministers have shown, and they are bound to show in the future, a deference to the wishes . . . of the British Government which they would not do if it were not for that state of subordination to Great Britain. . . .

'You have the old population' (he fairly defined the difference between the Dutch and British South Africans of that day) 'full of love, yearning after freedom, having done so for more than a hundred years. . . . They love South Africa as the Englishman loves England. They feel there is no other country for them—Holland, Germany, France, where the majority hail from are nothing to them. . . .

'The British population pride themselves upon the fact that they have a divided interest and that, if it comes to a question of whose interests have to take precedence, those of South Africa or those of England, then the majority declare they will have those of England, or, as they call it, the Empire. . . .'

He enunciated the principle of his life:

'This situation can only be changed . . . and a new national life for South Africa spring into being when these men are made to feel that they must choose and that they choose South Africa once and for all as their fatherland. . . . The old population has decided to continue pressing its

claim to independence . . . and the old population, I feel, and I think you feel too, eventually will win. We are here to-day to ask you that the wrong which was done in 1902 may be undone. . . . We feel we are entitled to that after what has been declared by England through you, and after what has been declared by the other Heads of States to the world and by what is the common feeling to-day of all people. . . .’

Mr. Lloyd George: You might just tell me one or two things that I have a general knowledge of. I would like to have your views with regard to them. Do you know anything about the views of the native population of South Africa?

General Hertzog: Of the natives of South Africa? No, except what I have seen in the papers. I believe they have had a meeting . . . where, according to the papers, the natives expressed a desire against restitution of the Free State.

Mr. Lloyd George: I am asking because I have only just heard there is a deputation either arrived in Paris or coming to Paris.

General Hertzog: I take it they are against restitution.

Mr. Lloyd George: Well, that is a very straight answer to my question. Another question I should like to put to you is this: How many Ministers are there in South Africa?

General Hertzog: Of the Church?

Mr. Lloyd George: No, I mean Ministers of the Union Government.

General Hertzog: They had ten some time ago. I think at the present moment they have nine.

Mr. Lloyd George: How are they divided between the races?

General Hertzog: Between the old and the new populations?

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Mr. Lloyd George: Between the Dutch and the British.

General Hertzog: That is, the Ministers themselves?

Mr. Lloyd George: Yes.

General Hertzog: I think the greater majority are of Dutch descent, unfortunately.

Mr. Lloyd George: Do not say unfortunately. They are very distinguished Dutchmen. . . . I know some of the great leaders. General Botha I know, and also General Smuts.

Smuts was accusing him, and he was taunting Smuts, but when it came to the point he could not resist so innocently prodding Smuts' rivals with his greatness.

Mr. Lloyd George gave them their answer within a day or two. He said they spoke, not for the people of South Africa, but for a political party; that the old Republics, after accepting responsible government from the British, chose, not to ask for independence, but to unite with the British colonies of South Africa; and that this Union of South Africa was not only an indissoluble fact, but the very expression of the principle of self-determination which was now General Hertzog's suit. . . .

Soon after his interview with the Boers Mr. Lloyd George saw the native deputation he had mentioned to General Hertzog. South African natives in every part of the country are great orators, the tale these men had to tell was one which oratory fitted; as Mr. Lloyd George was not a South African he did not know that a white skin makes a difference to actual suffering; he found the Boer grievances, by comparison, insignificant, and he was much (though ineffectually) moved by the natives. . . .

It must have brought Smuts—in the midst of his lonely perturbation in Paris—a bit of balm, a bit of home, to see a deputation of Boers acting in Paris as they might in Pretoria.

On the battlefields of Europe the old South African

## BOERS IN PARIS

game was being played: Smuts and Botha versus the Nationalists. There, fantastically, they were all together—as in a stage revue—all shifted to Paris.

Yet even Botha was Smuts' associate only as far as South African affairs were concerned. He brought him no help in his wider struggle.

Not even Woodrow Wilson brought him any help: Wilson, says Smuts, was at root anti-German.

From only one man—great, middling or little—was there any sort of response to Smuts' call . . . from Mr. J. M. Keynes.



## Chapter XXVIII

### THE SOLITARY DISCIPLE

#### I

**M**r. J. M. Keynes was the Treasury's chief representative in Paris, and Smuts used to talk to him about the money the Germans could and should pay; and the figure Mr. Keynes believed in was something over two thousand million pounds; and he agreed with Smuts that the Peace was iniquitous; and they considered together what could be done about it; and Mr. Keynes felt nothing more could be done about it; and in June he suddenly resigned his post and left Paris and the first Smuts knew of this was a letter from London when he himself happened to be in London. Mr. Keynes said in his letter that he hoped Smuts would feel one ought to do something about what was happening in Paris—revelation, protestation. He said he was to these ends, in any way, at Smuts' command.

Smuts answered at once. He always answers at once the letters he means to answer at all.

'My dear Keynes,' he said,

'Thank you for your note. I was sorry to notice that you had cut the painter. Not that you did not have every reason. But it is never advisable to act under the impulse and influence of such a strain as you had been passing through! However, it is done.

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'And now as to the future. I think it would be very advisable for you as soon as possible to set about writing a clear connected account of what the financial and economic clauses of the Treaty actually are and mean, and what their probable results will be. It should not be too long or technical, as we may want to appeal to the plain man more than to the well informed or the specialist. And when you could let me have a copy I shall be very grateful to you. Our actual course we need not decide just yet. Indeed, I have not yet made up my mind on the matter. The Treaty will in any case emerge as a rotten thing, of which we shall all be heartily ashamed in due course. But it is necessary to have a formal peace in order that the world may have a chance; which it will not have so long as the present state of affairs continues. And it may well be that with peace and the better knowledge of what it all means, a great revolution will set in and a favourable atmosphere will be created in which to help the public virtually to scrap this monstrous document. I am still considering the time and the manner of doing the thing, as very much is at stake, and no tactical mistakes should be made. But I want every preparation for the attack to be made in advance.

'I return to Paris to-morrow, and will watch as closely as possible the closing scenes of this most tragic drama.

'Good-bye, my friend, let me hear from you again.

'Yours v. sincerely,

'J. C. Smuts.'

'This most tragic drama' . . . 'Good-bye, my friend' . . . The invocation 'Prime Minister!' in the last letter to Mr. Lloyd George. . . . Are we not back to those *young* letters to Miss Hobhouse that Smuts wrote after the Boer War? If Paris was the unhappiest time in Smuts' life, it was, at least, an exultant, 'Greek' sort of unhappiness—by no means with-

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ering to the emotions. Here, battling against the forces of darkness, he was addressing his solitary disciple.

The solitary disciple preserved the atmosphere. Intolerable anguish and fury, he explained, had compelled him to leave Paris. He could do at any time, and speedily, what Smuts proposed, for he had it clear in his mind and it only needed putting on paper.

The work turned out to be *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, which effected more than Smuts could have hoped and also more than he could have feared.

For what he feels about *The Economic Consequences* is that it did indeed show up the Treaty, but by making a bonfire of the tortured figure of Woodrow Wilson.

'It wasn't the book's real merit', he says, 'that made it a popular success; or what it actually had to say about economic consequences. It was its brilliant belittlement of the great leaders, and chiefly Woodrow Wilson. Every paper I saw quoted the part about Wilson's bamboozlement. Wilson was already going down in America. In their hearts, the Americans wanted him to go down: they wanted to evade the duties he imposed on them. The book was absolutely to their purpose.

'It helped to finish Wilson, and it strengthened the Americans against the League.'

Greek irony is something that is never far from Smuts' consciousness. Could there be a better example of its working than is offered by Smuts himself? Take only these immediate instances: upholding the Peace he abhors is a system of Reparations based on his own words. He plans to undo the Peace, and what suffers is the thing that matters most to him in his life: the League.

*The Economic Consequences* demonstrated, among other things, the untenability of the Reparations clauses.

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### 2

Smuts' connection with Reparations far outran the Peace.

To begin with, Mr. Keynes did what he could to dissociate him from any personal responsibility for them. Yet still irony lay in wait. A year after the publication of his book he wrote the following private letter which was reproduced in *The Times*:

'General Smuts' connection with the Reparation Chapter', he wrote, 'was of the slightest. He was never a member of any of the Commissions or Committees which dealt with it, and was not brought into the question at all until a very late stage, after we had been wrangling about Pensions and Separation Allowances for many weeks. Week after week went by and President Wilson refused to succumb to any of the arguments that were addressed to him as to the inclusion of these changes being consistent with the Fourteen Points. Finally, General Smuts, as having been an outsider to the whole discussion up to date, was invited by the Prime Minister to give his opinion. He gave this in a very secret document which was seen by very few eyes, but which had importance because it was generally believed to have had some influence on the President. While, therefore, it is quite false to say that he *proposed* the inclusion of these changes, it is the case that an argument in favour was brought forward by him. . . .

'It is not fair, I think, that General Smuts should be saddled with the responsibility for the inclusion of Pensions and Allowances, when practically no one except the Prime Minister and the President really knows what he did say or what part he played in the matter. The document in which he expressed his opinion was an exceptionally secret one, and if it is to be alluded to in public there is a great deal of

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matter certainly not more secret which, if it were divulged, would be much more damaging to other parties.'

Well, now that pursuing irony. A copy of *The Times* containing this letter was barely delivered to Smuts in South Africa, when a book appeared called *The Making of the Economic and Reparations Sections of the Peace Treaty*, whose author was Mr. Bernard M. Baruch, one of Wilson's financial advisers in Paris.

In this book Mr. Baruch published in full that 'exceptionally secret' document of which 'practically no one except the Prime Minister and the President' knew—Smuts' Reparation Opinion; and after this it could never again be denied that Smuts had, at least, some responsibility for the Reparations he abhorred, and so much then for Mr. Keynes' exculpatory letter.

Mr. Baruch remained attached to Mr. Wilson, a persistent believer in Germany's capacity to pay what she owed, and three years after the publication of his book (which confirmed the belief that Smuts' opinion influenced Wilson) he sent Smuts, now in London, a seventeen hundred and sixty word cable protesting the justice of the Reparation clauses and denouncing Germany's evasion of her debts.

### 3

For what, since 1919, had happened about the Reparations was this: The Peace Treaty did not settle details of payment, it merely indicated the liability for payment. After the Peace a Reparation Commission considered how much Germany actually could and should pay—in what form, to whom and when; and the Commission met in various parts of Europe, and the more they met, the fainter became their expectations. First they said Germany owed the Allies two hundred and sixty-nine milliard gold marks;

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then they said two hundred and forty milliard gold marks; then they said two hundred and twenty-five milliard gold marks; and then, in London, they suddenly rushed down to a hundred and thirty-two milliard gold marks—that is, six thousand, six hundred million pounds sterling.

Germany began to pay; said she could not pay, stopped paying. The Commission indefatigably sat. Towards the end of 1922 the Commission said Germany had voluntarily defaulted over certain coal deliveries. France said this voluntary default entitled her, under the Treaty, to take separate action; Britain said it did not; in January of 1923 France occupied the Ruhr and brought black troops there and fostered in the Rhine provinces the idea of a separation from Germany. Belgium followed France.

Germany retaliated with what Smuts calls her 'mad policy of non-co-operation'. The people of the Ruhr—the industrial heart of Germany—gave up working. Whatever the French compulsion, no work was done that meant working for France. The German Government supported the strikers. To do so she began that process of devaluation which brought the mark down to a point where a pound of potatoes cost a milliard marks and a normal wage bill was two billion billion, which ruined the middle class of Germany but had the effect of wiping out Germany's internal debt. This went on until September when, having spent five hundred million gold marks in supporting the Ruhr strikers, Germany said she was done—done with strikers, done with reparations, altogether done.

It seemed to Woodrow Wilson and also to Masaryk that Germany need not go under unless she chose. It seemed to Smuts and those who thought with him that Germany was being compelled to go under, and with her the world.

An Imperial Conference was due to sit in London which Smuts had to attend. He determined to put his views before

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the Imperial Conference. He said, before leaving South Africa: 'The occupation of the Ruhr by France and Belgium is largely responsible for what is happening in Germany. No one can say what that may bring forth. We are faced with the collapse of the whole world. The British Government has at last realised the danger of the situation. Britain has openly declared her disapproval of the policy of France on the Rhine, and has declared that policy to be a violation of the Treaty of Versailles.'

It was Smuts' intention to add such force as he possessed to Britain's disapproval. And it was when news of this reached America that Mr. Baruch, on behalf of Woodrow Wilson, addressed his long cable to him. That was on October 2nd, 1923.

### 4

He began with a national compliment. England, he said, was the only country engaged in the war that had faced the facts and made a sincere effort to pay, 'and this at a cost almost impossible for others to realise. . . .'

He went on: 'Germany's continuous efforts to escape payment of a first sum in reparations add to the economic instability of the world. We have a real interest in seeing that Germany pays her just reparations. There seems to be little realisation in England and America of what it would mean to them if Germany should escape too lightly. In the United States of America the increased borrowing of the Federal Government as well as those of States continues; industries and individual dues to the war have piled up and added tax burdens: our Federal budget has risen from one billion to four billion dollars annually. While the amount of money we have to raise in taxes because of these increased expenses and borrowings has risen so greatly the taxes of the German Government and the fixed charge on

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German industries have been practically wiped out owing to the use of the printing press. That means that there must be taken from the efforts of our people in taxes for the Federal Government alone four billion dollars a year and nothing from the Germans unless they are compelled to pay some fixed tax in the way of reparations. Unless this is done Germany could conquer the world industrially. If modern civilisation with its growing standards of living is to be maintained, if the world is to pay its indebtedness, we must establish the moral responsibility of nations, settle reparations and restore the economic balance to enable people to work and save and pay the debts incurred in the war.'

He invoked the name of the thing he knew meant most to Smuts:

'I believe that cannot be done without a League of Nations. . . .'

He described what he understood by such a League, and continued:

'To you in this perilous moment of history I venture to send these thoughts in the hope that you will approve them and the conclusions growing out of them, and will lead in the labours which they portend.

'You represent a small nation, and, in your own person, a soldier who has seen the results of the rule of force and a statesman committed to the rule of international peace by co-operation. Your hand is in every article of the Covenant of the League. Your voice is one of high authority because your motives are unquestioned and your character and attainments eminent in your time. You have it in your power to state the world's case and to be heard and heeded. If anyone can bring about a realisation of the facts it is you. One clear call at this time from you marshalling behind you men of all nations who stand and think as you do may restore the world's moral and economic balance. Beyond and



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above all that it may save a total loss of all that the young men fought and died for from nineteen fourteen to nineteen nineteen.

'If a strong hand and voice are not now fearlessly and clearly and strongly employed to halt the retrograde movement of mankind, all that it spent its blood and property for may be lost again. The question before mankind is whether a nation's plighted bond is good. It is clear whither we are heading and what the remedy is. In earnestness and confidence the friends of peace and progress everywhere look to you to rescue and help render practical the ideals which the world has recently sacrificed so much to attain.'

Woodrow Wilson, from his deathbed, endorsed Mr. Baruch's appeal. 'I beg leave', he cabled, 'to associate myself with the appeal Baruch is making to you. I hope with all my heart that you will do what he suggested.'

Smuts replied to Mr. Baruch that he deeply appreciated his grave appeal, and the 'ground was being explored to see what action was advisable'.

He sent another cable:

'It will be most helpful for me to know whether there is any proposal that United States will be willing to join in reparation and interallied loan settlement which will bring permanent peace to France and Germany. I mean settlement agreed to by France and England and accepted by Germany. Or better still, settlement which United States will take a hand in bringing about. Without moral and financial support of United States it is doubtful whether there is sufficient strength left in Europe to save herself. Great gesture by United States now will have most far reaching effect. Perhaps you could explore ground unofficially or suggest to me other channel through which I could work and let me know result as soon as possible.'

Mr. Baruch could give Smuts the assurances he wanted

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on his own behalf but not on behalf of the American Government. And what Smuts did next was to go directly against Mr. Baruch's plea and Woodrow Wilson's support of it, and to make a speech passionately denouncing those excessive reparations whose swelling he himself had so accidentally, so unwillingly, brought about, and asking the world to help Germany save herself.

He compared, as always, the position of the Boers and the Germans. 'Defeated, broken, utterly exhausted, my little people also had to bow to the will of the conqueror. But it was not an impossible peace. The war was not continued in another form after the peace. The Boers were not treated as moral pariahs and outcasts. Decent human relations were re-established, and a spirit of mutual understanding grew up. The human atmosphere improved until in the end simple human feelings solved the problems which had been too difficult for statesmanship.

'To-night I am bringing a message from South Africa to the parent peoples of Europe. . . .

'Four or five years ago we were singing our own songs of victory. To-day we are all marching to certain and inevitable defeat—victor and vanquished alike. The international chaos is growing. The economic and industrial structure of Europe is cracking in all directions. Weariness and despair are sapping the morale of the peoples. Military hysteria is sapping their depleted financial resources. Everywhere you see armed men, everywhere gigantic armies, even among the small new States which cannot possibly afford them. In spite of the disappearance of the German army there are now about one and a half million more men under arms than in August 1914. The black forces of Africa have been called in to redress the moral and political balance of this mother-continent of civilisation. Human principles are everywhere derided and degraded. Standards of

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living for the peoples are everywhere sinking to lower levels. Famine for large numbers is not far off. Can we continue much longer on this march to destruction, this pilgrimage, this crusade of suicide on which Europe has started? . . .

‘I call for a gallant attempt now to save Europe from the dangers that threaten. . . . The time has come for the convocation of a great conference of the Powers who are mainly interested in the Reparation question, and at this conference the Governments of the Powers should be directly represented. . . . The United States of America should be there as an active member and bear her full weight, which, under the circumstances, may be more decisive than that of any other power. . . .

‘The main issue for settlement at the conference will be the Reparation question. . . . It is now universally recognised that the amount fixed by the Reparations Commission in May, 1921 (six thousand, six hundred million sterling) was too high and could not be paid, and even if it were paid the consequences for industry would be calamitous. . . . The amount has to be reduced to a reasonable figure . . . and Germany given a moratorium of about two years before payments are begun in order that she may in the meantime refirm her currency, re-establish her credit and balance her budget. . . .

‘Unless the Reparation issue is speedily got out of the way, Europe may soon be faced with a situation in which the Reparation issue will be swallowed up and disappear in far more grave issues. . . .’

He referred to the British Government’s statement that the invasion of the Ruhr was not in accordance with the Peace Treaty:

‘We are back in August, 1914. It is again a scrap of paper. Once more a great instrument of European settlement has

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been broken. We entered the Great War to avenge such a breach. It bodes ill for the future peace of Europe that five years after the war we should have to face the same situation again.

'The British people will no doubt be invited to share in the spoils of the Ruhr, our hard-pressed industrialists may feel tempted to accept the invitation. My advice is to have nothing to do with the Ruhr. . . .

'We should make it perfectly clear, in friendly but unmistakable language, that in certain eventualities this country will have regard to its own interests, and take whatever steps necessary to that end. . . .

'There is a serious danger lest a policy of excessive generosity on our part, or on the part of America, may simply enable France still more effectively to subsidise and foster militarism on the Continent.

'I sympathise with France. But I am equally moved by profound pity for Europe. Let France in the day of her victory and greatness not forget her noble historic mission as the great bearer of the liberal tradition in Europe. . . .'

French people know Smuts more by this speech than by any other work of his life, and they hated him for it. 'Their best criticism', says Smuts, 'was that I didn't understand the Germans and they did—they had the Germans for neighbours.'

The Liberals in England called Smuts a torchbearer of civilisation. . . . 'Here', they said, 'is the firm lead for which the world has been waiting.' . . . 'If we had at the head of affairs in England to-day a statesman of the moral and intellectual calibre of General Smuts the European outlook would be transformed. . . .' General Smuts has delivered the most eloquent, moving and statesmanlike speech which we remember on the troubles that overshadow Europe. . . . Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman may have done more

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even than unite South Africa in loyalty under the British Commonwealth. It may have given us a statesman capable of leading Europe out of an abyss more profound than any of which the modern world has knowledge.'

The Conservatives said the responsibility for Germany's plight rested on Germany herself, who was 'defaulting even to the length of ruining her own currency', and Smuts, they said, was mistaken if he thought he could come from South Africa and recklessly persuade the people of England to give moral support to the Germans against the French beside whom they had fought and died; nor would they 'tolerate a policy of breaking with France in order to save Germany from the situation to which she had deliberately brought herself'.

Simultaneously the news got about that Smuts' statement was authorised, and that, for the first time, a Dominion, and not a British, Premier had been chosen to speak for the Empire. The news, however, was not true. 'I had to explain this', says Smuts, 'to the Germans themselves. As it happens, I was in touch with them in London over questions concerning German South-West. They had sent a man over from their Foreign Office to see me. I can't say the Germans have behaved very well about German South-West, but that is another matter.

'Well, naturally, my speech meant something to this fellow. The English were hating the Ruhr business: it was turning them from France to Germany, the whole English-speaking world was hating it. Curzon, in particular, was hating it. Yet very little was being done to express all this feeling.

'I took it upon myself to express the feeling. I acted, you understand, unofficially. I consulted no one. But I could see my action would not be abhorrent to the Government—would, in fact, be a relief to them.

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‘When the German from the Foreign Office came to me full of what this sort of attitude would mean to Stresemann I told him I was speaking only for myself. “But you can see”, I said, “that the people here approve of my speech. If my personal advice is any use to you, I would recommend the Germans to give up their policy of non-co-operation, to rely on the goodwill of the world and make a sincere advance towards the better understanding which I am sure can be brought about.”’

‘I got into touch with Stresemann. Our correspondence followed those lines. You will remember that Stresemann’s policy ended in the Dawes Plan and the Pact of Locarno and that he got the Nobel Peace Prize for this work.’

As Smuts’ feelings embarrass him he can explain himself better from the impersonal distance of a public platform than in private. In private his emotional discomfort makes him speak—particularly of what matters to him—in a glancing, negligent sort of way that robs his words of their actual significance and creates an atmosphere of vagueness. Until one understands when Smuts is casual because he feels shy, and when he is impressive to hide his indifference, it is hard to estimate his exact meaning. Then one sees how often he has done, and will do, more than he says.

At the same time he thinks himself a bad public speaker, and he hates public speaking—it makes him physically sick, he says.

But even through his casual private speaking and his dissatisfaction with his public speaking, it is clear that he recalls his Ruhr speech without displeasure. ‘It was supposed to be a significant speech. One might say it had an effect. I was doing a great deal at the time, and I was tired, and I felt outside myself when I was making that speech. Sometimes, you know, you get rid of your flesh. Perhaps that is why I succeeded.’

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This, however (without reference to Smuts' speech), is what Mr. Winston Churchill says of the further steps in the Reparations business. 'To recover even a tenth of what was originally demanded, an interallied board, presided over by America, supervised the internal finances of Germany for several years, thus renewing and perpetuating the utmost bitterness in the minds of the defeated nation. In fact, nothing was gained at the cost of all this friction, for although the Allies extracted about a thousand million pounds' worth of assets from the Germans, the United States and, to a lesser extent, Great Britain lent Germany at the same time over two thousand millions more than she had paid. Yet while the Allies poured their wealth into Germany to build her up and revive her life and industry, the only results were an increasing resentment and the loss of their money.'

And by the end of 1931 Smuts was saying that, what with the fall in the British pound and Germany's default to Britain, Britain herself would have to default to the United States, and that the time had come to end the farce of reparations and the international debt payments which had broken international finance and poisoned international relations. Otherwise, he said, there would follow 'social upheavals in which much more than reparations and international debts might go by the board.'

And, in fact, all the nations now said they would not pay their war debts—except, most fascinatingly, South Africa. South Africa paid her war debts to England out of a double pride—pride in her stability, pride (the Nationalists were now in power) in not being indebted to England.

Smuts says to-day that Germany would have felt the Peace Treaty just—even the loss of her colonies and navy—if only it had not contained the 'monstrous' reparations and demilitarisation clauses.

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Still, it is interesting to think that, as Mr. Churchill demonstrates, Germany (unless she pays her debts—but who pays debts now?) made two thousand million pounds profit out of Reparations, used this money to restore herself, suffered no damage through being disarmed, and is to-day again the best-equipped nation in the world. . . .

The Treaty Smuts had attacked from its beginnings, at which he struck his blow in October 1923, against which he has not to this day ceased to struggle (not only, he says, because it was wrong, but because it was unwise and unenforceable)—the Treaty between Germany and the Allies—was signed on June 28th, 1919. America did not sign it. Wilson travelled the country pleading for it, broken in health, unable to sleep, weeping in public, ending his campaign with a stroke that paralysed him; but even his own Democrats voted against the Treaty. And the League it contained, the League America fathered, 'was left', says Smuts, 'on Europe's doorstep.'

The Treaties with the other Enemy Powers were signed at various times within the next fourteen months.



## Chapter XXIX

### SMUTS SIGNS AND PROTESTS

#### I

**M**r. Lloyd George had duly conveyed to Clemenceau the unanimous refusal of the British Empire delegates 'to authorise the British army and navy to renew hostilities in order to enforce acceptance of the terms of peace'; but, according to Colonel House, it was not until June 23rd—not until Foch threatened to reopen war and cross the Rhine—that the Germans agreed to sign the peace. Nor would they even then have done so, they said, had they not been rendered helpless by the armistice terms; on June 21st, indeed, they scuttled (rather than surrendered) their ships interned at Scapa Flow; and their guns were still firing on the Polish frontier as they signed.

The date was the fifth anniversary of the double murder at Sarajevo.

#### 2

For some time Smuts had been threatening that he would not sign the Peace Treaty. When, on June 23rd, the Germans themselves agreed to do so, he told Botha he would not put his name to the Treaty, nor would he stay to see its consummation. 'Smuts', cabled Botha to the Governor General in South Africa, 'refuses to sign Treaty and will publish statement giving grounds for action. While I substantially share his difficulties against Treaty I have

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decided to sign because my position as Prime Minister is different from his, and my signature is necessary to make Union a member of the League of Nations and secure for her the new status in the world.'

He added that, while South Africa's position in the world was thus safeguarded by his own signing, Smuts' action in not signing would 'serve to ease the minds of our Dutch people who will deeply regret when they come to know extreme harshness of Treaty. We could not defend Treaty as a whole and above compromise appears to make situation easier for us in South Africa.'

This is the way Smuts' statement opened, that was going to explain why he could not sign the Peace Treaty:

'I have not been able to sign the Peace Treaty and I wish to summarise briefly the reasons for my action.

'It is with the deepest regret that I differ from our leaders at the Conference, whose enormous difficulties I appreciate and whose actions I do not presume to criticise. But, largely because of the faulty methods and procedure pursued, conclusions have been arrived at to which I could not in good conscience subscribe my name . . . ' and so on.

Yet Botha was not really convinced by the argument he had telegraphed to the Governor General. He did not think that for him to sign and for Smuts not to sign would satisfy the English on the one hand, and the Dutch on the other. He told Smuts, in fact, that 'above compromise', as he called it, would make his situation quite untenable in South Africa. He had to sign—that was clear. He had to sign in order to establish South Africa's *right* to sign in its new shape as an independent Dominion. (There were many who thought it wrong that Britain, through the separate powers of her Dominions, should have, in effect, six votes.) But what would the result be in South Africa of Smuts' proudly, indignantly, contemptuously refusing to sign the document

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to which he himself had put his name? Would it not give the idea of division between them? Would it not look as if Smuts had chosen the noble, and Botha the ignoble, course? How could he maintain authority in South Africa in so false a position? He asked Smuts to come with him to Mr. Lloyd George.

Mr. Lloyd George suggested to Smuts that his proper course was to sign under protest. He was not precluded from issuing his critical statement as soon after as he chose—immediately, indeed, upon signing.

To this advice and to the pleadings of Botha, whom, in his illness, he could not resist, Smuts yielded.

June 28th found him, with the other eighty representatives of the nations, at Versailles.

### 3

It was a cool grey day and no wind stirred the half million flags of Paris and the garlands and trophies along the streets and boulevards.

Soldiers had come to Versailles at dawn, and since dawn people in their cars and people in other vehicles and on foot had filled the road from Paris to Versailles—solemn people, remembering the words of the Mayor of Versailles: '(The Government) desires that the ceremony shall preserve the character of austerity which it is fitting should attend the memory of the mournings and sufferings of France.' The castle of Versailles was not decorated. The delegates met in the long Hall of Mirrors, beneath the painted figures of its roof, among the marble and gold and gilded bronze, in the sea-light of these mirrors facing the windows to the gardens.

They sat on crimson chairs at a table that was the half of a long rectangle. At the same table, on the inside of the rectangle, sat the German representatives. At other tables em-

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braced by the rectangle sat the secretaries and officials, and there too were the tables, covered with golden cloths, at which the delegates were to write their signatures. Smuts' copy of the Treaty, printed on parchment in English and French—very simple—is numbered 5. There were three hundred and fifty seats for members of the press and visitors.

Among all the representatives of the Allies there were only three men who had met the enemy in the field—Foch, Smuts and Botha. 'My soul', Botha had said before coming there to sign the Peace, 'has felt the harrow. I know what it means.'

Now, as he sat there, two months before his death, and expecting it, he wrote on his agenda paper:

'God's justice will be meted out to every nation in His righteousness under the new sun. We shall persist in prayer in order that it may be done unto mankind in peace and Christian charity. To-day, the thirty-first of May, 1902, comes back to me.'

The Germans rose and signed the Peace Treaty. The Americans, the English and the French followed. South Africa and the other British Dominions signed for the first time as individual nations. The Chinese, bitter concerning Shanghai, told that they could not sign with reservations, refused to sign. At a quarter to four the last signature was given, Clemenceau rose and declared the Peace accomplished, the guns fired, and before the others left the Germans left. In England King George said: 'The greatest war in history is over. I join you all in giving thanks to God.'

But Smuts wrote in a letter: 'This Treaty is not the Peace; it is the last echo of the war. It closes the war and armistice stage. The real Peace must still come and it must be made by the Peoples.'

And even while the guns were announcing the Peace in

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Paris, in London the newspapers were declaring Smuts protest against it.

### 4

Smuts' protest against the Peace he had signed was the protest he had made when he thought he would not sign it. Only it began differently.

'I have signed the Peace Treaty,' it now read, 'not because I consider it a satisfactory document, but because it is imperatively necessary to close the war; because the world needs peace above all, and nothing could be more fatal than the continuance of that state of suspense between war and peace. . . .

'I look upon the Peace Treaty as the close of these two chapters of war and armistice, and only on that ground do I agree to it. . . . The real work of making peace will only begin after this Treaty has been signed, and a definite halt has thereby been called to the destructive passions that have been desolating Europe for nearly five years. This Treaty is simply the liquidation of the war situation in the world.

'The spirit of the new life, the victory of the great human ideals, for which the people have shed their blood and their treasure without stint, the fulfilment of their aspirations towards a new international order, and a fairer, better world, are not written in this Treaty, and will not be written in treaties. "Not in this Mountain, nor in Jerusalem, but in spirit and in truth," as the Great Master said, must the foundations of the new order be laid. A new heart must be given, not only to our enemies, but also to us—a contrite spirit for the woes which have overwhelmed the world: a spirit of pity, mercy and forgiveness for the sins and wrongs which we have suffered. A new spirit of generosity and humanity, born in the hearts of the people in this great hour of common suffering and sorrow, can alone heal the

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wounds which have been inflicted on the body of Christendom.

‘And this new spirit among the people will be the solvent for the problems which the statesmen have found too hard at the conference. There are territorial settlements which will need revision. There are guarantees laid down which we all hope will soon be found out of harmony with the new peaceful temper and unarmed state of our former enemies. There are punishments foreshadowed over most of which a calmer mood may yet prefer to pass the sponge of oblivion. There are indemnities stipulated, which cannot be enacted without grave injury to the industrial revival of Europe, and which it will be in the interests of all to render more tolerable and moderate. There are numerous pin-pricks which will cease to pain under the healing influence of the new international atmosphere. The real peace of the peoples ought to follow, complete, and amend the peace of the statesmen.

‘In this Treaty, however, two achievements of far reaching importance for the world are definitely recorded. The one is the destruction of Prussian militarism; the other the institution of the League of Nations. I am confident that the League of Nations will yet prove the path of escape for Europe out of the ruin brought by this war. But the League is as yet only a form. . . . The new creative spirit which is once more moving among the peoples in their anguish must fill the institution with life and with inspiration for the pacific ideals born of this war, and so convert it into a real instrument of progress. In that way the abolition of militarism, in this treaty unfortunately confined to the enemy, may soon come as a blessing and relief to the Allied peoples as well. And the enemy peoples should at the earliest possible date join the League and, in collaboration with the Allied peoples, learn to practise the great lesson of this

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war, that not in separate ambition, or in selfish domination, but in common service for the great human causes, lies the true path of national progress. This joint collaboration is especially necessary to-day for the reconstruction of a ruined and broken world.

'The war has resulted not only in the utter defeat of the enemy armies, but has gone immeasurably further. We witness the collapse of the whole political and economic fabric of Central and Eastern Europe. Unemployment, starvation, anarchy, war, disease, despair stalk through the land. Unless the victors can effectively extend a helping hand to the defeated and broken peoples a large part of Europe is threatened with exhaustion and decay. Russia has already walked into the night, and the risk that the rest may follow is very grave indeed. The effects of this disaster would not be confined to Central and Eastern Europe. For civilisation is one body, and we are all members one of another. . . .'

The protest ended with an appeal to the Germans to make 'a real honest effort to fulfil their obligations under the Treaty'; and to the Allied peoples to remember that 'God gave them overwhelming victory, victory far beyond their greatest dreams, not for small selfish ends, nor for financial or economic advantages, but for the attainment of the great human ideals, for which our heroes gave their lives, and which are the real victors in this war of ideals'.

## Chapter XXX

### THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

#### I

**A**gainst Smuts' conception of the spirit in which, the war being over, the Germans should be met, stood the possibilities of the time and the feelings that supported current actions.

When, for instance, the leaders of the day were considering the question of hanging the Kaiser (which, in the end, could not be done since, to the relief of many, Holland would not give him up), when there was this idea that the Kaiser ought, in his person, to expiate the sins of his people, the reason why he should not be hanged was put in these words:

'If you are going to treat the ex-Kaiser as the sole root of evil, you are going to acquit the German people. It is too early to do that before you are satisfied that their change of mind and heart is complete and permanent. . . .'

But the reason why he might be hanged was most bitterly put thus:

'You cannot say he should die because he plunged the world into war, because he had a perfect right to plunge the world into war; and now we have conquered we have a perfect right to kill him, not because he plunged the world into war, but because we have won the war.'

Balfour wondered if it might not be in the interest of the world if Germany split up into a Northern and a Southern State, or Bavaria left Prussia, to attach herself to Austria.



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Woodrow Wilson, despite Smuts' veneration for him, could no more than the others agree with Smuts.

The condemnation of Wilson to-day rests—in America, on the belief that he was fooled into the war; in England, on the rumour that he was fooled into the Peace; in Germany, on the result which, they said, fooled them; and in France, on the intervention that (it was clamoured) fooled the victors of a peace dictated from Berlin.

The prevailing idea is that, being fooled, and so fooling others, being soft, being bamboozled, he broke his bond and betrayed the faith of the world.

Wilson, in fact, came to Paris with a particular conception of the Germans, he died with that particular conception, it was not a soft conception, and it was not Smuts' conception.

Among those Points, Particulars, Ends, Principles the Germans accepted from Wilson, they had to accept also Wilson's declared distrust of them. That was part of the bargain. It was part of the spiritual that supported the material conditions.

In the circumstance, indeed, that there were spiritual as well as material conditions lay the chief difficulty in applying the Fourteen and Supplementary Points. Those Points enunciated ideals to strive at rather than terms capable of absolute fulfilment. The ultimate fulfilment of these terms depended on the spirit no less than on the letter. What sort of spirit could, at Versailles, be brought to such fulfilment?

By the time the Germans accepted Wilson's comprehensive demands and declarations, the spirit in which the Fourteen Points had been presented to the world and accepted by the world was gone. Now it was not January 1918, but October 1918. Between January and October the ruin of the world had been clinched, and who could feel what had

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been felt at the beginning of the year? The Fourteen Points were stale.

Now, moreover, the Allies had it in their power to enforce their own terms; they no longer needed the Fourteen Points; they knew the Germans were accepting them because the alternative was a victors' peace dictated from Berlin; they could not be (and they were not) enthusiastic about the Fourteen Points. They acquiesced in them because Wilson's offer had never been withdrawn, because they were too tired to do anything else—they acquiesced in them. No more.

The mood in which Wilson came to Paris was: 'There can be no bargain or compromise with the Government of the Central Empires.' 'Germany will have to redeem her character, not by what happens at the Peace table, but by what follows it.' And after the Peace he told his Americans: 'We wrote the Treaty in its final form and then said "Sign here"'. What else did our boys die for? Did they die in order that we might ask Germany's leave to complete our victory? They died in order that we might say to Germany what the terms of victory were in the interests of justice and of peace.'

How was this justice—this 'impartial justice' he spoke of in his declarations to Germany—to be accomplished? Who was to pronounce it? Where, in a world consisting of parties in the case, was an impartial judge to be found? Who was to determine justice—the rendering to each man of his due?

Wilson's own Americans, repudiating him, could not base a judgment on laws they rejected in these words of Theodore Roosevelt: 'Mr. Wilson and his Fourteen Points and his Four Supplementary Points and his Five Complementary Points and all his utterances every which way have ceased to have any shadow of right to be accepted as expressive of the will of the American people. Let them (the

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Allies) impose their common will on the nations responsible for the hideous disaster which has almost wrecked mankind.'

Mr. Lloyd George expressed the emotions of the British when he said: 'The first thing to accomplish in this war is to make every country feel that, in future, if it attempts the outrage perpetrated by Germany upon civilisation, it will inevitably encounter due and destructive punishment.'

In France now were the graves of millions, and seventeen hundred thousand wounded men—come back—like that—and prevailing devastation. The Russians were thrashing about in revolution. The Belgians, the Roumanians and the Serbs were returning to their ruined countries from which they had been driven. Even in Africa, in the whole of dark Africa, there were only two countries not involved—not then, not directly—in the war: the Spanish Protectorates and Abyssinia. Were the Spanish Protectorates and Abyssinia to sit in judgment?

What sort of justice could, in these circumstances, be awarded excepting only 'wild justice', revenge? How many men could have it in them to feel as Smuts, by temper, experience and philosophy, was in the unique position to feel, to share Bacon's thought that 'revenge is a kind of wild justice. . . . In taking revenge a man is but even with his enemy, but in passing it over, he is superior, for it is a prince's part to pardon?'

Smuts' protest against the Treaty of Versailles was a document conceived in that faith which is his deepest attribute.

A man may be a great poet or scientist or soldier and yet not a great man.

He may, on the other hand, be a great man without having greatness in all his parts, without having even a single great faculty. A man is great if he has the faculty of greatness itself.

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Smuts is distinguished in half a dozen different capacities. He is said to be great (according to the temper and understanding of his critic) in one or some or all or none of them. Since 'there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not', he has done wrongs and made mistakes. But he is a great man because he is greater than his circumstances, his fortune happy or unhappy, his faults or even his virtues; because having the genius of greatness, being great in his essence, he sees life greatly.

Smuts' greatness is rooted in an enormous idealism. He is an idealist, not only in philosophy, but (without knowing it) in the simple, old-fashioned way of a romantic boy who wants to be good and brave and make the world a better place.

The misfortunes of Smuts' life are due to the fact that he does not guard against evil because he will not see it.

His head approves his heart. It is so reasonable, so wise and rewarding to be good. How, for their own sakes, can people choose not to be good, or wish to hate and destroy one another, or fail to see that in hating and destroying one another they destroy themselves?

Neither the story of life and time nor the vision of his eyes can convince him that, but for accidental circumstance, all the world wants to be good.

At the base of his plea for Germany lay the remembrance of how Campbell-Bannerman had been generous to the Boers, and that generosity had moved himself towards the English until he felt he could merge with them. Campbell-Bannerman's deed had ever since been an exemplar for him. Now, here, regardless of the different character of the two wars: of the people that fought them, the circumstances that led to them, the results that hung on them, he thought to emulate it. In the Boer War a small isolated people, with no power to hurt the world, had been fought

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and defeated by a nation—not only the greatest in the world, but great enough to undo a wrong. Nevertheless the Boers had lost their land; and time and chance—not treaties—had returned it to them (with interest).

In the Great War the Germans were the aggressors. 'Within another ten years,' as Smuts himself said, 'had the war not come, Freedom, which has never been properly organised, would have fallen a prey to her great enemies. . . . Germany might well have grown so powerful that she could have put humanity in bondage for another century.' Not after the event, but as far back as January 1907, Sir Eyre Crowe had written a memorandum for the Foreign Office saying: 'The Edifice of Pan-Germanism with its outlying bastions in the Netherlands, in the Scandinavian countries, in Switzerland, in the German provinces of Austria and the Adriatic, could never be built up on any other foundation than the wreckage of Europe'; he had warned England then against a policy of continually yielding to Germany; the head of every German state except Wurtemberg had acquiesced in the war; here, indeed, Europe lay wrecked.

A nation is what it stands for, the gods to whom it resigns its spirit. If the new spirit of which Smuts wrote was anywhere, it was not latent in the Germans to prevent them from wrecking Europe again.

Yet Smuts could only see the Germans at Versailles in the position of the Boers at Vereeniging. . . .

### 2

Well, Smuts was seventeen years from Vereeniging. Now the world is seventeen years from Versailles. It has had the same time to learn forgiveness.

It has learnt even more than forgiveness, so that there is actually a universal tendency to blame the Treaty of Ver-

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sailles for every misfortune which has befallen mankind since 1919.

It is the instinct of human beings, and even the instinct of animals that have lived with human beings, to blame themselves when they are hurt.

For they know that if they are wicked punishment follows. Punishment—pain—is accordingly associated in their minds with their own wickedness—they feel it to be the consequence of their own wickedness. An injured dog will plead to be forgiven for the pain he suffers. An injured man will ask God what he has done.

Particularly in England, where the sense of justice is biblical, people now torture themselves with the thought that if the Treaty of Versailles had been softer a different Germany, and therefore a different world, might have resulted. Even those who do not search their hearts (nor the clauses of the Peace Treaty) say so.

Yet Germany was not made different by the Treaty of Versailles. Her history shows the contrary. As far back as 1832, exactly a hundred years before the advent of the Third Reich, when Germany was up and France down, Heine was writing: 'In a certain Tavern in Göttingen I had the opportunity of admiring the precision with which my friends "the ancient Teutons" prepared the lists of those who would be proscribed by them as soon as they arrived in power. Anyone who was descended, even seven generations back, from a Frenchman, a Jew or a Slav, was to be condemned to exile. Anybody who had ever written a word against Jahn or the absurdities of the old Germans themselves might expect the death penalty. . . .

'The patriotism of the German makes his heart shrink like leather in the cold, until he loathes all that is foreign, until he abandons all claims to be a citizen of the world, or

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even a European, and desires only to be a German, narrow and limited. . . .’

Could any possibility of good or bad in the Treaty—from the dismemberment of Germany to the extension to her (in Smuts’ lifelong phrase) of the hand of friendship—be of significance beside the accomplishment of the war itself: ten million people killed in fighting, twenty millions dead through illness; a world dependent for its future upon the heirs of destruction? Apart from the thirty million lives the war cost, it cost also, says Principal Nicholas Murray Butler, four hundred billion dollars.’ With that money, he says, ‘we could have built a two thousand, five hundred dollar house, furnished it with a thousand dollars’ worth of furniture, placed it on five acres of ground worth a hundred dollars and given the home to each and every family in the United States, Canada, Australia, England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, France, Belgium, Germany and Russia. We could have given to each city of twenty thousand inhabitants and over, in each country named, a five million dollar library and a ten million dollar university. Out of what was left we could have set aside a sum at five per cent that would provide a thousand dollar yearly salary for another army of a hundred and twenty-five thousand teachers and a like salary for another army of a hundred and twenty-five thousand nurses.’

All that accumulation of the past, all that potentiality of the future, the war ate up. Even rejecting the Treaty made no difference. Even the prosperity of the war made no difference. America, that would not sign the Treaty of Versailles and became rich feeding the fighting Europeans, crashed when the Europeans no longer needed her excessive produce.

What, on top of such a war, could any Treaty be but a plaster on a body broken in pieces? Is it not, indeed, a mir-

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acle that God's creatures still strive towards the light and do not cry out against His great sun that it is merely 'an old warmed-up jest'?

Perhaps deeper even than their capacity to forget, and deeper even than their inclination to forgive, is their consciousness that, if human revenge is only wild justice and to pardon a prince's part, the highest prerogative is the vengeance of the Lord. Perhaps on that they rest.

### 3

In actual fact, if the Treaty that it is now so fashionable to criticise—with easy words, on patient paper, in forgetfulness of days when a maddened world was not composed of Smutses—if the Treaty could not remake the world, it was probably as good a Treaty as, in all the circumstances, could have been effected.

It was harsh but (as the incident of the Saar came to prove) not unreasoningly, irremediably harsh. It was rendered capable of revision by the League. If it sought, in retribution and for the world's sake, to reduce Germany, it sought also to guard the helpless, relieve the downtrodden and enfranchise the nationally bonded. As a result of the Treaty more peoples than deserved it achieved consequence and that Article in the Covenant was guaranteed which provided for 'fair and humane (labour) conditions for men, women and children' throughout the world. If it has proved a failure (the fact apart that no treaty could undo such a war) the reason is not only that it was too harsh, but too noble—in its deepest essential, the League—too noble for a humanity suspicious, since the war, of nobility.

'It is a Treaty', said Woodrow Wilson, 'made by men who had no intention of crushing the German people, but who did mean to have it burnt into the consciousness of the world that no people could afford to live under a







J. C. SMUTS, LONDON, 1919

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Government which was not controlled by their purpose and will and which was at liberty to impose secret ambitions upon the civilisation of the world. . . . There is no national triumph sought to be recorded in this Treaty. . . .’

Smuts took off the uniform he had worn for four years and prepared to return to South Africa.

## Chapter XXXI

### FAREWELL TO ENGLAND

#### I

There were many who thought he should not return to South Africa: the English statesmen with whom he had worked, those who wished him to guard the League of Nations, and also some of his own countrymen. 'I saw remarks in the South African papers that probably I was not coming back. When I read these papers there almost seemed to be a wish that I should not come back. I had a great deal of inducement offered me in Europe not to come back. But I went there as the servant of this country and this people, and I was determined that, whatever happened, I would return to them.'

It was, nevertheless, he says, the hardest decision of his life. 'The world was beginning again, and I had been present at its rebirth. There was the League—my thoughts were in it. To leave Europe in 1919 meant to give up any intimate share in working for these things—the new order and the League. I have never even seen the League in session. It meant coming back to a land where too often my countrymen hated my ideals and despised my larger hopes.

'On the other hand, there were my English friends saying it was crucially necessary for me to remain in England. You can believe me, there was some temptation not to come back.

'I had, of course, my family to consider. They could never have left South Africa. I would not have wished them

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to leave South Africa. They had to be South Africans. But, at the moment, it was not so hard to face the thought of seeing them only now and then—once a year when I visited South Africa or when, in due time, they came to Cambridge. . . . I am a man that loves home. I do not care for social life. I am not really happy except on the veld. South Africa is never out of my mind. But I had already been an absentee husband and father for four years. Since Union I had always had to leave home for half the year to attend Parliament. I could accommodate myself to a solitary existence as a human being. I had my place in England. They wanted me to stand for election and remain in the Cabinet. There was work I felt I could do for the League. There would always be the League or something based on it, for without such an organisation the world could not be saved. Whichever it was, the League or a substitute, I could have helped.

‘So there was this great work drawing me to stay in England. I realise that I might have been knocked out politically. Imagine Lloyd George being knocked out—that powerful engine stopped in the height of its power. I remember saying to him—was it in 1923?—“Give up politics. Travel round the Empire for six months. Learn the Empire at first-hand. Then come back as an elder statesman speaking for the Empire. . . .” I think that was good advice. He would have been Prime Minister to-day if he had taken it. But no, he wanted to fight. He is a terrible fighter. He remained the leader of a faction; and when he thought he had a chance at last to come back there was Abyssinia, and, in effect, a khaki election which ruined him.

‘I suppose that sooner or later I would have been knocked out in England too. But, in fact, it was my fate to be knocked out in South Africa—the last of the pre-war governments to go. And then I couldn’t give myself the

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advice I had given Lloyd George. It would have meant abandoning everything Botha and I had worked for—union and peace in South Africa.

‘In the end I came back because of Botha. It was a choice between my loyalty to Botha and my missionary feeling for the League. Almost at once I was left to do my work alone. So it was good that I came back.

‘Life is a battle on many fronts. And the hardest is always the battle on the home front. What a fight it has been! What a suffering! There were times when I could not help contrasting my circumstances in England with the distrust and hatred and revilings I had to strive against in my own country.

‘Well, I have tried to do my duty.’

### 2

Before Smuts left England he was asked to speak on the situation created by both the war and the peace. He had not the time or the occasion to speak and so he wrote what was, in effect, a farewell message which appeared in all the English newspapers.

His message was, as always, that the spiritual overcomes the material. . . .

Smuts is the creator of the Union's defence system and knows well the material power the Allies had and how ineffective proved Gandhi's 'soul force' in South Africa. Yet he expressed his feeling when he said that 'Germany had entered upon a vast venture in materialism, and had constructed the most tremendous mechanical apparatus of victory the world had seen, but the neglected moral factors, the public opinion of mankind, the outraged conscience of the nations in the end avenged themselves and inflicted the most signal defeat on the forces of scientific materialism. . . .'

## FAREWELL TO ENGLAND

'I wish', he went on, becoming more practical, 'to add a word in reference to Germany and Prussia in particular, as the situation is too grave to permit of any shrinking from the frankest expression of opinion. The brutal fact is that Great Britain is a very small island on the fringe of the Continent, and on that Continent the seventy odd million Germans represent the most important and formidable national factor. You cannot have a stable Europe without a stable, settled Germany; and you cannot have a stable, settled, prosperous Great Britain while Europe is weltering in confusion and unsettlement next door.

'Russia is an even more obscure and difficult problem than Germany and one on which no dogmatic opinion would be justified. But . . . I am seriously doubtful about the sort of policy we seem to be pursuing there. Russia can only be saved internally by Russians themselves, working on Russian methods and ideas. She is a case of national pathology, of a people with a sick soul, and only Russian ideas could work a cure. . . . Our military forces, our lavish contributions of tanks and other war material, may temporarily bolster up the one side, but the real magnitude of the problem is quite beyond such expedients. Leave Russia alone, remove the blockade, adopt a policy of friendly neutrality and Gallio-like impartiality to all factions. It may well be that the only ultimate hope for Russia is a sobered, purified Soviet system. That may be far better than the Tsarism to which our present policy seems inevitably tending. . . . If we have to appear on the Russian scene at all, let it be as impartial, benevolent friends and helpers and not as political partisans. Be patient with sick Russia, give her time and sympathy and await the results of her convalescence. . . .'

He referred to the new Dominion status of the former British colonies that was a result of the Peace settlement.

## FAREWELL TO ENGLAND

He called it 'one of the most outstanding achievements of British political genius.'

He thought that in great dependencies like India and Egypt the solution was 'to reconcile native self-government with a system of expert advice and assistance', and thus 'replace the dead hand of bureaucratic domination by the lighter but no less effective touch of the friendly hand.'

The Irish question he spoke of as 'a chronic wound the septic effects of which are spreading to our whole system; and through its influence on America beginning to poison our most vital foreign relations. . . . Our statesmen have just come back from Paris, where they have dealt with racial problems like that of Ireland and in every way as difficult as the Irish problem. They may not shrink from applying to Ireland the same medicine they have applied to Bohemia and many another part of Europe.'

It fell to Smuts himself to make within two years a most significant contribution to the settlement of Ireland.

He ended his message: 'What is the good of all the wealth and comfort and glamour of the Victorian age when the next two decades bring us to the graves of ten million young men slain because of the base passions of greed and domination which lurked below the smiling surface of that age? . . .

'We are at the beginning of a new era. The old world is dying around us. Let it also die in us.'

He was back in Cape Town early in August. His two youngest children barely knew him; the two eldest thought he should not have signed the Peace Treaty. He had had an experience such as has not fallen to the lot of any other South African, but also a suffering measurable with it. He felt not triumphant but tired, and three weeks later Louis Botha died.



## Chapter XXXII

### SMUTS AND HIS BRETHREN

#### I

He stood at Botha's graveside and spoke as is the custom among Boers when their great men die, and he ended with these words: 'Great in his life, he was happy in his death. For his friend was reserved the hard fate to bury him and to remain with the task that even for him was too much.'

It had been, indeed, too much for Botha to bear the enmity of his own folk who were against his English adherence. For that he had been called 'Judas', 'traitor', 'bloodhound', 'murderer'. Pamphlets had been printed in Holland (German propaganda, says his biographer) that charged him with the betrayal of the Boers in the Boer War. A senator had accused him of altering the map of German South-West Africa in order to justify an attack on the country, and he had sued the senator for libel.

Yet Botha had also been intimately loved.

To Smuts came a greater opprobrium, an admiration, sometimes willing, sometimes reluctant, but always puzzled; never (since it was not in him to invite it) this intimate love. 'With far greater intellectual powers than Botha,' it was said when Botha died, 'with equal tenacity of purpose and indefatigable energy, with the same ardent patriotism, the younger statesman is not so liberally endowed with the gracious patience that made the late Prime Minister's personality so winsome for all men.'

## SMUTS AND HIS BRETHREN

On this understanding—on the country's recognition and his own—that he was a leader, but not a loved leader—he succeeded Botha as Prime Minister of the Union.

His followers were those people of British or Dutch descent who believed in him and one another; his opponents those who doubted him and one another. Of both belief and doubt the embodiment was the man Smuts. As the years went on it became more and more clear that simply feeling one way or another for Jan Smuts directed the politics of South Africa.

Although, from the time of Campbell-Bannerman, Smuts' pride and passionate desire had steadily impelled him to save face and say that Britain's generosity had made brothers of British and Dutch, it would have been nearer fact to say it had made stepbrothers of them: they were in the same family, but they were differently born, differently bred, and the inheritors of an agelong feud.

Conceive—not the romantic Romeo and Juliet—but parent Capulet and parent Montague for the better management of their adjoining estates marrying one another, and bringing to the joint home their offspring of previous marriages. That was the position. Closer intimacy might make the stepbrothers understand one another, but it was more likely to result in a wilder hate. . . .

Well, then, England had barely given the two Boer colonies Responsible Government when Botha and Smuts were hurrying them towards Union with the two British colonies: the offspring of fighting Boers and Britons were rushed together. And, naturally, they were no sooner together than there were complaints, resentments, doubts, fears, jealousies, grievances, irritations, accusations, factions and fights.

The first Union Parliament was not yet assembled when the troubles began. Presently General Hertzog broke with

## SMUTS AND HIS BRETHREN

Botha and Smuts. There were labour risings on the Rand, drastically suppressed. The Great War came, and German propaganda, and many Boers hated to go against Germany, and others saw in the war their chance to escape from England, and there was a Rebellion.

Botha and Smuts went out against their own people, and also against the Germans. Hatred of them swelled among those people whose sense of duty was not their sense of duty. The more Botha and Smuts were successful, the more they were hated.

Smuts' superlative achievement overseas, his acclaim there, crowned in their eyes his misdemeanours. Their mood was: 'How long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?'

Now, having sat where the great world was controlled, having learnt to think of that world as one body—a body renewed, he was back in a world of twenty, and a hundred, years ago. The feelings he had shared when he wrote *A Century of Wrong*—those feelings still persisted among his old countrymen. They had not conferred with directors of destiny, conceived a new British Commonwealth, planned a League of Nations, watched, in the dying embers of the old existence, a vision of the new. They had no awed 'Look-we-have-come-through' spirit, no sense of rebirth and transfiguration. They were separated from Smuts by all that separated the new world from their old world, and the distance between the future to which he aspired and the past to which they clung was the measure of their division.

### 2

And then if Boers were against Smuts because of his dreams of Union, so, because of his dreams of Union, were Englishmen. And if Boer and British jingoes were against him so, since the troubles of 1913 and 1914, were workers.

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And if white workers were against him so, by example, were black workers. A few weeks before the election of 1920 white mineworkers came out on strike. Three days after the strike was settled, between thirty and forty thousand black mineworkers came out on strike in the way taught them by the white mineworkers.

Then, naturally, if black and white mineworkers were against him and came out on strike, the shareholders of the suffering mines were against him.

And finally, whatever he did, there were Britons who could not forget that, after all, he was a Boer. And who knew for what sinister purposes he really wanted them to unite with their old enemies?

So that not only were the people of South Africa in different hating groups; but even in Smuts' efforts to keep South Africa within the British Commonwealth those who might have been expected to give him their vehement support, did so in a half-hearted, doubting spirit.

Smuts found himself standing in Botha's place, at the head of a disintegrating party and supported, in moments of extremity, by distrustful factions of other ways of thinking. And against him were the most ardently nationalist of his own people.

'When I came back to South Africa in August 1919,' Smuts told the Imperial Conference two years later, 'I found that a republican movement had sprung up there, and that a very strong party had been formed whose main—in fact, only—plank was the secession of South Africa as an independent republic from the British Empire.

'I countered the movement by putting the other picture, by explaining to the people of South Africa what had really happened in regard to the status of the Dominions. I explained to them that they were no longer in the position of a subordinate British colony as they had been before . . .

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that we in South Africa and all the Dominions had acquired an international status, had been recognised by our signature of the Peace Treaty as having international status. . . .

‘On that general line I fought the General Election of 1920. I had to fight another on practically the same issue at the beginning of 1921.’

Smuts’ explanation to the Imperial Conference is, in fact, a summary of his experience on his return to South Africa. It leaves out, however, in Smuts’ tradition of not admitting the worst, the spirit in which these two elections were fought.

Here are quotations from Smuts and his opponents which may indicate that spirit.

### 3

#### QUOTATIONS FROM SMUTS

‘In the years I have been absent from this country I have seen much and learned much. I have seen human suffering and human misery on a great scale. I have come back with no desire for the perpetuation of differences and divisions. From my heart all bitterness has gone. My only wish is to see real union among the people in this country....’ (10.9.19).

‘I have returned to this country after an absence of some years and have had this great position of responsibility placed on my shoulders. I made an appeal the other day for peace and conciliation, for the forgetting of old grievances and old sores, trusting that it would be received in the spirit in which it was made. You have heard how it was received. It was in a spirit of bitterness and contumely members of the cross-benches listened to my appeal and dealt with it. That will not deter me. My aim will be to leave nothing undone to bring together the different sections of our white population. I shall continue as long as I have strength in my body and the opportunity....’ (11.9.19).

## SMUTS AND HIS BRETHREN

'You have a great country, a great continent, with great mineral resources—and a little over a million inhabitants. . . . You will not be allowed to remain in Naboth's vineyard. . . . In a state of isolation you will always be in danger. . . . To-day we are part of the British Empire, part of the greatest, most powerful Empire in the world. We have not only the protection of that Empire, but we have also the protection of other powerful influences. . . . In addition to that we have received a position of equality and freedom not only among the other states of the Empire, but among the other nations of the world. Shall we now throw away all these advantages to get back to our old antheap? . . . I am standing here to-day to make the strongest and most urgent appeal to this House and the country to live in the present and the future. It is dangerous, it paralyses a people, to live in the past' (11.9.19).

'It is not so many years since, as a youth, I trekked over the Karroo plains with my commando, and I cannot forget those days. And when I think of our history and the happenings of those bygone days and compare those days with the present, then I am bound to say our history is like a miracle performed by God' (23.9.19).

'I think back to-night on two great happenings in which I have taken part in my young life. I have been a member of two great peace conferences. I hope there will never be a third. I have seen seven years of war. I trust we shall never see war again in South Africa or the world. . . . After nearly three years of heavy fighting and suffering the Boer people were led to Vereeniging. Many of you in those days listened to me and became rebels. In the end the war led to Vereeniging. I shall never forget that occasion when the Boer Republics had to submit to superior force and learn their bitter lesson' (23.9.19).

'We were bitterly divided among ourselves. . . . We

learned the lesson of co-operation. . . . The four Provinces of South Africa came together and formed this great Union of ours. . . .' (23.9.19).

'To the Hague Conference the nations would not invite the Boers. . . . Although we called ourselves independent republics the nations of the world would not recognise us.

'In Paris your Government was represented among the nations of the world' (23.9.19).

'There have been great changes in the world and in the British Empire. The British Empire which went into the war is not the same which came out of the war. That Empire is to-day an alliance of free peoples, of which the Union is one, in the great League of Nations' (23.9.19).

'We have come out of this war practically untouched. While Europe lies bleeding, torn, maimed, nearly destroyed, so that it will take generations to build up again, while other countries are weighted down by debt and are suffering under heavy taxes, we have come out of the war and at the end of it we are more prosperous than we were at the beginning. . . . And I say that where Providence has given us such opportunities after all the bitterness and hatred of the past we should be worse than stupid—we should be mad—if we allowed these opportunities to pass and if we failed to develop our resources and to work for the welfare of this country' (23.9.19).

'South Africa deserves it at our hands that we should develop it. We have no other country but this and we do not want to drive anybody away. Our old Dutch population has no other home than South Africa, and there are thousands who have come here since and have settled among us, and we say with Ruth: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God "' (23.9.19).

'I have not touched on politics. There are greater things than politics.

## SMUTS AND HIS BRETHREN

'I shall carry your interests in my heart, but I ask you to carry me in your hearts. . . . Help me make a success of the great task which has been entrusted to me' (23.9.19).

'I was State Attorney in the Transvaal before the Boer War, and in the Boer War I was a general. I did my utmost for that republic when many others who to-day talk loudly about the republic went away to seek the protection of the British flag. I do not blame them for what they did in those days, but I think I have a greater right than they to speak about a republic' (26.9.19).

'The Boer War was a war not only of England against the two republics, it was also to a very large extent a civil war.

'We are a small people here and we have no friends in the world. . . . Do not let us pit our small handful against the world' (26.9.19).

'If you people are determined to continue wallowing in the mire of racialism Pretoria West had better begin to look for another representative and the country for another Premier' (26.2.20).

'Talk about independence! South Africa is the most dependent country in the world. It depends on America, England, Japan and other countries. The road to independence is to make the country economically independent, to develop its resources and build up industry' (9.3.20).

'A man is not defeated by his opponents but by himself' (10.3.20).

'The temper of South Africans is curious and full of individuality. They are only a handful of whites and each man counts far more than he is worth. Each private thinks he is a general' (7.10.20).

'I am fighting for peace and goodwill. I did it in Europe when people were as bitter as could be. Now it is said that the League will be a failure and also my work in South Africa. But I feel convinced that both the League and my



work here will prove a success, because if these things fail the world fails. . . . Unless we purge our souls of bitterness we are mere beasts. That is my policy and my religion' (28.12.20).

'I am like the Apostle Paul. I perish daily' (28.12.20).

'Is this the time to drive away capital and to talk of cutting the painter? Our best friend . . . is England. She is also our moneylender. . . . We get from her assistance, moral and political. Her incomparable navy protects our shores. Do not let us talk and act like children' (22.2.21).

'I have had one bit of luck at meetings. When they wouldn't hear me, I sat down for two hours and then left without speaking. I had a rest' (22.2.21).

'I know I do not possess the confidence of many of the Dutch-speaking people as General Botha did, but I can honestly say that the policy I am following is the policy handed on to me by my old leader' (24.2.21).

'If I thought freedom could be gained only by way of a republic I should be a republican. But our present status as a member of the Empire and the League of Nations gives us complete freedom. . . .

'We can be a free people even within the British Empire. My view is that the British Empire is an alliance of free states in which we have one king, and that is the bond which keeps us together. The British Government is not the bond, the King is the bond. He is the King of England, King of India and King of South Africa and other parts. Under the alliance we keep together and protect each other and help each other financially, with advice and otherwise, each according to his light. That is my conception of the British Empire, and that is the right conception, that is the conception which triumphed in the councils of Paris' (26.9.19).

## NOTE

It will be seen that, in this last quotation, Smuts reaffirms the commonwealth principle he enunciated in April of 1917 at the great welcome given him in the gallery of the House of Lords.

He had then worked for the dominion status of the British colonies. Milner, who once, as he says, had 'disdained' him, whom he had hated (although he will not admit it, will not say that word himself) above all other men, who had been the most ardent of Imperialists, was now his friend and helped him to achieve his purpose. Mr. Lloyd George adopted not only the name by which Smuts chose to distinguish the new British Empire from the old, but also his conception of it. It was generally accepted in England. When one of the Australian Prime Ministers came to London at the end of 1917 to protest against Imperial Federation, a friend said to him: 'You can put your speeches in your pocket. It is useless to deliver them. Smuts has come here and killed the whole thing.'

His view prevailed at Paris. In the Treaty of Versailles the dominion status of the lands that had once been British colonies was recognised.

Fifteen years later, in accordance with Smuts' principle, and the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations and the Protocol of Geneva and the Kellogg Pact and the Balfour Declaration and the Statute of Westminster, a new Union Act was made to supersede the original South Africa Act. And the point of this new Status of the Union Act was that, while the sovereign independence of South Africa was specifically declared, the King ceased to be, in the words of the old Act, 'of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland', and became also the King of

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South Africa, and British and Union nationality became indissolubly bound together.

Passionate Englishmen said that, in supporting the new Act, Smuts was betraying England, his English followers and proclaimed principles. Passionate Dutchmen said that, in supporting the new Act, he was betraying South Africa, his Afrikaner followers and proclaimed principles. His words of 1917 and 1919—the achievements of all the subsequent years, the facts accepted by the Governments of the world—were shocking news to them. ‘What’, says Smuts, ‘can you do with our South Africans? It is our history to hate. We *want* trouble. The people *want* to misunderstand me.’

### 4

#### QUOTATIONS FROM SMUTS’ OPPONENTS

##### LABOUR HECKLING

Smuts: It is difficult to know what to do about profiteers.

Voices: Hang them! Shoot them!

Another Voice: Why not deport them?

Smuts: I am not so ruthless as I was a little while ago. We are all softened in feeling. . . . (17.1.20).

Smuts: (howled down) Give me a chance. No hooliganism will pay in this election.

Bystander: It’s a strange business that a man of such gifts should waste his time on these hooligans. (Uproar for two hours. Smuts departs without speaking.) (5.12.21).

##### NATIONALIST HECKLING

Nationalist M.P.: Did you say the British Empire had ceased to exist?

Smuts: No. I said the old British Empire had ceased to

## SMUTS AND HIS BRETHREN

exist in its old form and we now have this new British Empire, this union of States.

Nationalist M.P.: Do you want to do away with the Union Jack and give us a new flag for South Africa?

Smuts: Listen to the fatal poison of that question.

Nationalist M.P.: Where is the poison?

Smuts: You know very well what you were after (28.1.20).

Voice: Do you deny South Africa's or any Dominion's right to secede when it pleases?

Smuts: Yes. I deny that.

Voice: Then you and your colleagues are the only statesmen in the Empire to do so.

Smuts: No. But perhaps I am not even a statesman (22.1.21).

## LEADING NATIONALIST PAPER

'This is the way by which General Smuts proposes to lead us to greatness; the way of external and internal war, of persecution, of treading down the freedom of his fellow man, fellow citizen and fellow burgher' (26.8.19).

'General Smuts' mouth is full of our economic bliss. A hundred thousand poor whites are in our midst' (16.8.19).

'He goes his own regardless way in Parliament, and manages so that he alone, and no other Minister, shall ever say anything' (6.9.19).

'(He) has sold our right for a mess of pottage, shut the door in the face of our independence' (8.10.19).

'He has nothing to forgive and forget. If he had not lost all sense of honour and decency, he would throw himself at the feet of General Hertzog and beg his forgiveness of the terrible injustice and the grave insult done to him and our old Afrikaans folk when six years ago General Hertzog

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was driven from the Botha-Smuts Government to pacify the English jingoes' (16.10.19).

'His hide is thick and he has no principle but opportunism' (6.9.29).

### JINGO PAPER

'We are sick of the fulsome laudation of General Smuts. . . ' (28.1.20).

'General Smuts was a Minister of the Crown. He had the alternative of remaining loyal or turning traitor. Because he did not turn traitor we are asked to worship him as an embodiment of all the virtues' (28.1.20).

'Preaching alone won't save us' (28.9.19).

### TIELMAN ROOS

'General Smuts goes about the country like a dog trying to bleat like a sheep' (16.10.19).

'He says he will forgive us and extend the hand of brotherhood. We are not aware that we have ever wronged him' (16.10.19).

'He is no longer going to fool the people with his "slimness"' (16.10.19).

'We want to be relieved of the weight of England's troubles which we now have to bear. We are being sucked dry by the Empire' (16.10.19).

'South Africa can and must become the greatest state in the world. . . . We no longer choose to be the infamous tail of England. No, we must so develop that England becomes the tail of South Africa' (16.10.19).

'General Smuts has earned no respect in Europe' (20.12.20).

'The Nationalists, when in power, will be charitable enough to give him a free ticket back to Europe. I will not speak of deporting him, but a free ticket to Europe, that will be at his disposal' (20.12.20).

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'We have to take care that he is allowed to break his own neck before he has the chance of breaking ours' (20.12.20).

### GENERAL HERTZOG

'It is now the sole object of General Smuts to form a great British Empire. South Africa is now too small for him. He wants to stand on a mountain instead of an ant-heap and to have his feet in two continents' (20.12.20).

'General Smuts has brought South Africa to the verge of ruin' (4.12.20).

### NOTE

When Smuts, on his return from England said: 'I am standing here to-day to make the strongest and most urgent appeal to this House and the country to live in the present and the future. It is dangerous, it paralyses a people to live in the past. . . .' he went on, in his habitual way, to embellish his argument with a metaphor.

It happened that, at just about this time, a great worker in veterinary science was demonstrating that the cattle disease the Boers call gallamziekte was caused by cattle eating old rotten bones on the veld. What Smuts now said was that for people to live in the past was like eating old rotten bones and getting this same gallamziekte.

Immediately Tielman Roos, a follower of General Hertzog—in his private life an amiable and even courtly man, popularly called the Lion of the North, destined to become Minister of Justice and afterwards a Judge of Appeal and then to affect the politics of South Africa in a most spectacular fashion—immediately this man rose in a terrible passion to say that by old and rotten bones Smuts meant the bones of the dead heroes of the Boer War.

The Nationalist papers took it up. It spread among Boers in town and backveld that Smuts had shamefully derided the bones of the dead heroes of the Boer War. . . .

## SMUTS AND HIS BRETHREN

Yet there was a way of undermining Smuts even more potent. Colour! He was accused of saying that 'we and the Indians are one blood', and that he himself would be prepared to serve under an Indian officer, and further to the same effect. Finally a photograph—an example of 'the working of Imperialism, our Higher Status and our British Connection'—was published in the Nationalist press and circulated in leaflets throughout the country. This photograph showed a Griqua (Hottentot) soldier with a French bride. Beneath the picture was what purported to be a poem by Smuts welcoming this Griqua, Jefta Windvool, and his white bride to South Africa. 'One king, one flag, one khaki suit, one Empire . . .' said the poem, and each verse ended 'Though I am white and you are black'.

One has to know the feeling in South Africa about marriage between black and white—about colour at all (so strong that a community may demand the removal of a magistrate for awarding a native the merest human justice against a white man)—one has to understand this, to appreciate the terrible intention of the photograph. Smuts had it submitted to experts. 'Their view', he found, 'was that it was a faked photograph. The uniform of the alleged Griqua was not a South African uniform, but Australian, and the cap was Australian. The experts said the picture of the girl and the so-called Griqua soldier were taken at different times, in different lights.'

### 5

There were people in South Africa, and coloured people among them, who felt their country shamed by these attacks, and they offered Smuts, in public addresses, the assurance of their pride in him, their understanding of his greatness, their loyalty and their confidence.

The two elections which, as Smuts told the Imperial Conference, were fought solely on the issue of secession took place in March 1920 and in February 1921.

The results of the 1920 election were: South African Party, forty-one, with three Independent supporters; Nationalists, forty-four; Unionists, twenty-five; Labourites, twenty-one—a triumph for the Nationalists, but a deadlock for Government.

Smuts offered to form a best-man Government.

But the Unionists (the Party Dr. Jameson had brought into Union) could still not bring themselves to lose their identity in a Boer Party, though it was understood Smuts had their support.

The Labour Party refused to join him because, as their leader explained, 'the Labour Party Constitution prohibits members of the Labour Party from accepting office in a Government in which the Labour Party has not a majority.' . . . Three years later, with nine representatives, the Labour Party joined the Nationalists.

To General Hertzog Smuts wrote:

'Let us give the people rest, so that their minds may have a chance of calming down. Let the grass grow over the battlefield, and let the political strife later be resumed in a softer spirit and range over less dangerous subjects than those over which we, in recent days, have been so sharply divided.'

General Hertzog's terms were roughly:

South Africa first.

No relation with England that might prejudice South Africa's right to self-determination.

The Prime Minister appointed by the majority. (That is, General Hertzog had to be Prime Minister.)



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The right of National Party members (but not in Parliament) to press for alteration of the existing form of government as against the right of South African Party members (but not in Parliament) to counteract that movement.

Fourteen years later, when the Nationalists, after ten years in Government, were going down and the South African Party going up, and Smuts knew the country behind him and felt himself in a position to make his own demands, he accepted from General Hertzog precisely these terms. For the time was past, he believed, when General Hertzog and those who followed him would wish to exercise this right of secession, and it mattered little who was called Prime Minister and nothing mattered, but only to have unity and peace. Now, in 1920, he rejected the terms. 'Parliament cannot be isolated from the people in this way.'

The fears of Englishmen—their understanding that only Smuts held South Africa to the British Empire—supported him. An uneasy vigilance was the spirit of the House: the Nationalists watching for an opportunity to defeat the Government. The Government guarding against giving that opportunity.

In the middle of the year, indeed, the Government escaped defeat by only two votes, when, on a motion entirely opposed to their own (farming) interests Nationalists supported Labour as 'a general protest against the Government's Imperial policy'. Smuts spoke of an 'immoral' combination and a 'disgraceful' political move. General Hertzog bitterly retorted. The Government was saved only by the deliberate refusal of four Labour members to vote on their own motion.

The position was impossible and Smuts made a final attempt to alter it. He issued an appeal to all moderate South Africans to join him. There followed a great congress at

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Bloemfontein. Six hundred delegates came. No Nationalists joined him. The invitation remained for the Unionists. And the Unionists, seeing before them the menace of a break with Britain, considering the South African Party programme and finding in it nothing, after all, hostile to their own, accepted it.

Parliament was dissolved on December 31st, 1920, and an election was announced to take place in February of 1921. Like the last it was fought, as Smuts a few months later told the Imperial Conference, solely on the issue of secession.

It was before this election that the photograph of the Griqua soldier with his white bride and the welcoming poem by Smuts was circulated, and women of the Nationalist Party proclaimed a day of prayer and invoked against Smuts the spirit of the Voortrekkers, and the memory of those who had died in the concentration camps during the Boer War, and the help of God.

The results of the election were: South African Party (including Unionists) seventy-nine; Nationalists, forty-five; Labour, nine; Independent, one.

## Chapter XXXIII

### THE MARCH OF A NATION

#### I

There was a people to whom the struggle of the Boer Nationalists was of extreme interest—the Irish. The Irish Nationalists saw in the struggle of the Boer Nationalists a reflection of their own struggle. They quoted with approval the clause in General Hertzog's programme which said:

'This clause lays down that the existing relationship between the Union of South Africa and the United Kingdom is recognised, but the ultimate destiny and aim of the people of the Union must be full freedom and the Party therefore declares itself opposed to any policy of closing the door against attaining this aim.'

Here, they remarked, was exactly what Parnell meant when he said, in the words inscribed on the pedestal of his statue in Dublin:

'No man has a right to fix the boundary of the march of a nation.'

But not exactly what Rhodes meant when he subscribed ten thousand pounds to 'Mr. Parnell's cause'.

#### 2

The concern of the Irish Nationalists—the Sinn Feiners, the Covenanters, the rebels—in the South African situation

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was a good deal older than General Hertzog's party. It dated, indeed, from the Boer War.

'When the English armies,' an Irish officer came to write to Smuts in 1918, 'when the English armies were annexing your country, the Irish endangered their own position by defending it. They loudly condemned in Ireland, in England and in Parliament, every invasion of the Transvaal, and one of the main reasons held out to Englishmen for refusing self-government was the accusation that they had cheered in Parliament the victory of Majuba and the defeat of Lord Methuen. This danger never prevented them from supporting the Boer cause because it was the cause of liberty; they have always been the friends of freedom. I remember, when I was going to South Africa much against my will, my neighbours assembled to see me off, but they could not help saying: "We hope you will return safe, but we hope the Boers will win."'

He told Smuts how, as an officer in the British Army, he had written a letter from South Africa 'describing the desolate state of the country, the burning of farms, the clearance of all food from the houses of women whose husbands, fathers or brothers were fighting, the concentration camps, the atrocities already committed and the new orders issued. Fortunately for me my letter escaped the censor; my brother went to Ireland and published it in the *Freeman's Journal* as the letter of an officer at the front. It bore so clearly the marks of accurate personal observation that no one disputed this, and it caused a great sensation; it was copied into *The Times*, Mr. Stead issued it as a pamphlet and Mr. Cartwright [a Cape Town editor] got two years' imprisonment for publishing it in a Cape paper. There was such an outcry that Lord Kitchener was forced to make a public denial, and a very infamous plan to destroy your people was overthrown.

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'I need not say that if my authorship were known, I would have been sent to prison or shot. I claim no merit for doing what I thought right—I could not in honour have done otherwise—but I have necessarily kept it secret, and disclose it to you now in the hope that you, in return, will use your influence to save my country from the grave disaster of a conscription which will drench the country in blood. . . .

'We never thought or hoped any Boer could ever help us, but this was the feeling we had for your people, and we did not fear to proclaim and act on it. I therefore ask you now to use your influence, privately first, and, if necessarily, publicly, to prevent conscription and to secure self-government of the same pattern as South Africa.

'I know it required courage and self-sacrifice to defy public opinion, but MacBride and others did not count the personal cost when they went out to fight for you, nor did they who backed you in Parliament count the political cost.

'Please consider this letter confidential. We are living under a tyranny of which the outside world knows nothing and hundreds are imprisoned and grossly maltreated for much less.'

### 3

Well, there was the connection Smuts had with Ireland because of the Boer War.

Then, when Smuts got Responsible Government for the conquered Boer States at the hands of Campbell-Bannerman, there was renewed Irish interest. Why could not Ireland also have Responsible Government?

In later years Smuts established a personal link with the Irish Nationalists.

Roger Casement's brother Tom was, like himself, in the British consular service. Tom Casement was the British

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Consul in Delagoa Bay and Smuts used to see him and talk to him about Irish affairs.

The Great War came. Smuts took over the command of German East Africa; it happened that Tom Casement served under him, and it was during this period that Roger was tried for high treason and executed.

'Tom Casement', says Smuts, 'came to me in an anguish that you may imagine, and he asked me to accept his resignation. He said there was not only the bitterness he felt on behalf of Roger, but that he himself was now bound to be suspect. He said he could not go on like this. I told him it was his duty to remain. I said I could not spare him and trusted him fully and would vouch for him. . . .'

At the end of his German East campaign Smuts came to London, and he was hardly there before Mr. Lloyd George asked him to preside over the Irish National Convention. That was generally thought to be a brilliant idea, for Smuts had just delivered his great Commonwealth speech and there was his history as an enemy of Britain turned friend. Who could know better how to change an enemy to a friend?

He refused the offer and joined the War Cabinet. But because he was a Boer and because of the talk about his presiding over the Irish Convention, Smuts was now held to have a particular concern with Ireland and so throughout his war period he used to get communications from Ireland asking him to use his high influence either on this side or on that. In 1918 appeals to him came most passionately from the rebels. For now there was a vehement campaign—supported by the Roman Catholic church—against conscription and the Irish had, in fact, renewed their negotiations with the Germans—trying to arrange for a fresh rising while the Allies were fighting their death fight in France.

'Suppose' (he received one letter in June, 1918) 'the Irish

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nation makes an act of faith in you, and consents to submit the whole question to the Imperial Conference, we would ask: By what agency do you suggest that the Conference is to be made sufficiently acquainted with the facts, now concealed, misrepresented and falsified by a dangerous propaganda and by the censor? We have a daily increasing knowledge of how untrue the state of the country, the conduct of the Government, and the objects of the Irish people are pictured to England and to the world. By this propaganda, no matter how fanciful its inventions and grotesque its imagination, every fact which would be important on the Irish side in establishing the truth, or revealing falsehood, is suppressed by the censor. You doubtless have no conception of how completely every possible means of communication is now in the hands of the "Orange Bloc", and of how the English are misled in information by the Ascendancy, as completely as ever they were in 1641 and in 1798, with shameful and tragic consequences.

'One reason, among many, which has brought the Irish to desire that the question of their position should be made an international one is because it would then have to be dealt with judicially, whereas members of the Imperial Conference are satisfied that they already know—from reading English *ex parte* statements—all that is known. . . . We have seen missions sent over here, invariably so shepherded that not one of them is able to come in contact with a single representative of Irish life outside the Orange Lodges. Envoys on Irish questions come over specifically instructed and ordered not to speak on Irish politics to individuals suspected of national sympathies. The facts which I could tell you would make a pantomime if they were not so tragic in their results. . . .

'As regards conscription we remember that, at the time when conscription was decreed here, it was refused on

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national grounds by General Botha, and was never attempted to be enacted in England. Would any South African, remembering the history of his country, believe that General Botha could have called for voluntary recruiting if, in the first instance, conscription had been enacted at Westminster with threats, and hung as a menace over the people—a menace enforced, I may tell you, by an occupying army of which the high officials use the most appalling language of massacre, and the soldiers are not controlled in their truculent demeanour?

‘What can a South African think of imposing conscription in Ireland against the strong representations of the Irish people, the Castle, the whole of the Privy Council, the lawyers, the magistrates, and all public bodies, as well as innumerable protests from the most prominent Protestant Unionists?’

‘The fate of Ireland has always been to receive ingratitude. . . . We may well ask why knight errantry should always be demanded of Ireland—to ride abroad redressing human wrongs, all but her own. . . . What is her “continued freedom” for which Ireland is asked to strike—“freedom” under the rule of our ascendancy of Orange Lodges, with every Nationalist and every Catholic thrown out of the Government, and herself isolated from the Commonwealth of peoples, and the object of malignant slander? . . .’

### 4

In June of 1921 Smuts was due to attend an Imperial Conference in London. It was with difficulty he got there in time because of a great trouble among the natives of South Africa that ended in bloodshed. About this trouble (concerning which more will presently be told) Smuts had to address the Union House on May 24th, his fifty-first



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birthday, and it was only because the mail boat sailed for England on a Thursday instead of a Friday and arrived in England on a Saturday instead of a Monday that he was able to attend this conference on the Monday, and, before doing so, to see the King.

It was understood in South Africa that what the Premiers of the Empire were going to discuss at the Conference were such matters as Empire Defence, Foreign Policy, the renewal of the treaty with Japan and so on.

And Smuts himself dreamt of no activity outside the Conference. He did speak there about those things, not least about Japan. For 'the problems of the Pacific', he had declared even before he left, 'are the world problems of the next fifty years. There Europe and Asia and America meet.' And at the Conference he said: 'If we look to world peace, we must do nothing to alienate Japan. . . . I am anxious that we should avoid that, because Japan is the danger of the future: there is no doubt about that.'

Then he said also at the Conference: 'We cannot stop with the disarmament of Germany. It is impossible for us to continue to envisage the future of the world from the point of view of war.' . . . 'The only path of safety for the British Empire is a path in which she can walk together with America. . . . I would, instead of being an ally of France . . . assume a position of independence, putting the British Empire entirely aside from all of them, and taking a line of our own, a strong line if necessary. . . . She should know that she is dealing with an independent Britain, who is going to judge impartially of the whole position. . . . In a certain number of years we shall be in a great crisis in Europe and not all the time in a position of independence, but involved with France and all the odium which her policy may bring upon us, and not really strong and independent to act according to our own interests. That is

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why I am looking more and more in the other direction—that is, to America. . . . Let everyone know of England's diplomatic independence. Let Russia know it; let Germany know it, that we are not tied to this policy by way of an alliance or an Entente or any forced co-operation. . . .'

He went across to the Imperial Conference to say such things there, and to speak about India and Russia and Palestine and the League—always the League. And some of his thoughts have been justified by time: his thoughts concerning Japan and the League. And some not: his thoughts concerning France and England's isolation from Europe—for since there are no islands in the air, England is of Europe as New England is of the United States.

However, Smuts' main work in England, the most successful diplomatic work of his life, did not, as it happens, lie within the Cabinet of the Imperial Conference. And what Smuts found himself discussing with the King before attending the Conference was the situation in Ireland.

In January 1929 English newspapers told the story of this discussion with the King, and its results. Only not accurately.

## Chapter XXXIV

### SMUTS AND IRELAND

#### I

When Smuts arrived in England that Saturday morning he went to stay with friends at Oxford, and in the evening he attended a Rhodes dinner and made a speech. On Sunday a message came for him to attend at Windsor Castle.

He found the King anxiously preoccupied with his forthcoming visit to open the new Ulster Parliament. To this opening—because of the moral effect it would have—Sir James Craig had urgently invited the Dominion Premiers, and Mr. Lloyd George had advised the King to add to the moral effect by opening the Parliament.

Members of the King's household, on the other hand, were filled with misgivings about his visit. As things were in Ireland, they said, it might have a result very different from that intended—it might look like a deliberate affront to the South.

Already the South was so incensed that in the recent elections the Republicans had won a hundred and twenty-four out of a hundred and twenty-eight seats. They had burnt down the Customs House at Dublin. There was a British army in Ireland almost as large as the whole British army before the war. The populace was in a fury because of this army—the Black and Tans. It was actually dangerous (the noes said) for the King to go to Ulster.

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Smuts agreed that the King could not neglect the advice of his Government. He thought, at the same time, that, as the King had never before opened a subordinate parliament, the South might well feel that here was an act of deliberate and significant partisanship.

But was there not, he went on, in the very peculiarity of the occasion, a unique opportunity? Might not the small, dangerous affair be turned into something great and beneficent? The King (he said, in his commonwealth way) was King not only of England and Ulster but of Ireland and every separate British Dominion. Here was the moment and the place to proclaim the fact. From Belfast, from the throne of the Ulster Parliament, the King might do more than merely open a small Parliament. He might address all Ireland—address a message of peace to all Ireland—and to the Dominions too.

The King asked Smuts to put into words the sort of message he meant.

If there is a thing Smuts understands it is the art of declaring messages of peace. What man has had greater practice at it? How readily he could declare one for the King.

He finished, and the King suggested he might repeat his ideas to Lord Stamfordham, and Lord Stamfordham joined them, and the end of the discussion was that the King asked Smuts to write down his suggestions for a speech for the opening of the Ulster Parliament.

Smuts stayed the night at Windsor Castle, drafted a speech, and gave it to Lord Stamfordham.

### 2

According to the newspaper story of January, 1929, the speech that had originally been prepared for the opening of the Ulster Parliament was a 'bloodthirsty document' amounting to a declaration of war against the South.

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'I know nothing of this speech,' says Smuts; 'I never saw it. All I know is that next day Lloyd George invited me to attend a committee meeting of the Cabinet, to give my opinion of the King's speech. And what should this King's speech turn out to be but a typewritten copy of the draft I had myself written the night before. I found them working on it. Nothing was said about my being the author. They innocently consulted me and I innocently answered them. But imagine the interesting position.

'Well, they toned the thing down a bit, they made a few minor alterations, but in substance the speech the King delivered next week in Belfast was the one I had prepared. . . .'

The speech had an historic effect and the British Government decided to carry forward its results.

The Irish rebels too found inspiration in it.

### 3

Here Tom Casement reappears. He was now, says Smuts, in Ireland among the rebels and he must have told them about his personal connection with Smuts, for what happened next was that he called on Smuts in London with a message from Mr. de Valera and other Irish leaders. They wanted to get into touch with Smuts, but they could not come to London because they were in hiding from the Black and Tans—in and around Dublin, accessible, but in hiding. And they asked therefore that Smuts might visit them—secretly—in Ireland.

Smuts sent a representative to Mr. de Valera to get further particulars.

### 4

What Mr. de Valera said was what General Hertzog's followers said and say to-day. 'The rights of a Dominion

include the right to secede. . . .’ ‘When a door’, said his memorandum, ‘is open or can be unlocked at will, you do not go out without reason. If it be locked and someone else has the key, you can think of nothing but getting it open. Ireland, if free, would be faced with the fact that she would have nothing to gain and a great deal to lose by secession. . . . The crux of the situation is that the only chance of making Ireland not want to secede is to make it entirely possible for her to do so.’

Apart from these psychological reflections there were certain ideas he wished to put before Smuts himself because he distrusted the English and doubted whether their terms were genuine. ‘They are probably’, said Mr. de Valera concerning the English terms, ‘some trickery of a new kind. The experience of the Irish nation has always been that they get tricked sooner or later.’ If they were not any sort of trickery, why, he asked, were not the Dominion statesmen associated with the offer? That might have helped to show their genuineness.

The thing he now wanted Smuts to understand was that the Irish people had died for a republic, and so, in no circumstances, would they come under the crown. They wished primarily to ‘cut the painter’ and be left alone. Apart from this—apart from the King business, and cutting the painter, and also the naval, military and air clauses—they were prepared to be entirely reasonable: to make Free Trade, neutrality and non-aggression Treaties with England and the Dominions, and even to take over a portion of the national debt.

But it depended on the North. ‘I wish I knew what Craig wanted. What does Ulster want? Why doesn’t it see that this politicians’ trick of separation is played out, and that we can and should combine? There is no religious difficulty whatsoever. This is simply a brothers’ quarrel which is to

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be made up without the aid of any third party. . . . We can and should agree.'

But how, he was asked, could he expect the North to agree to 'neutrality' and 'cutting the painter'?

'For a united Ireland', said Mr. de Valera encouragingly, 'I would swallow a lot. . . . For unity I could persuade my Dáil to accept much that is otherwise unacceptable. . . . There is no sense in our having a twenty-six-county Dominion and Craig having six counties in a small scheme.'

He suggested that the Dáil members now in prison should be released so that they might not resent his dealing, during their absence, with the British Government. He thought the public would be greatly impressed if all the people now in prison were released. He wanted Smuts to find out Sir James Craig's position, arrange for him (Mr. de Valera) to meet Craig, help him make proposals acceptable to the British Government, and be present, in a consultative capacity, at interviews with the British Prime Minister.

If, said Mr. de Valera, he were encouraged by the North, he would go on with the scheme of a united Ireland even if it meant a struggle with his followers. 'For a united Ireland', he repeated, 'I would swallow a lot.' If the North proved unreasonable, saying the difficulties in the way of union were insoluble, he proposed that the twenty-six southern counties should form a republic of their own.

He wrote Smuts a letter setting out these ideas.

Sir James Craig, in due course, refused to meet him.

## 5

Then Sir Horace Plunkett wrote to Smuts:

'From my pretty full knowledge of my countrymen at home and abroad I can truthfully say that no living statesman would be more acceptable to the majority of the Irish

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people as a political adviser than yourself. . . . If at any time you wish to come to Ireland incog, and meet a few of the people who count over here but do not appear in public or go to London, I should most gladly do myself the honour of placing my house at your disposal. . . .’

‘But I didn’t know,’ says Smuts, ‘how far this meant business. About de Valera’s letter I went to see Lloyd George. . . .’

‘Lloyd George’, he says, ‘was delighted. He said it was the very thing to follow up the King’s speech, and also, he said, I was the very man to do the job—no Englishman, an outsider, a Boer. He agreed that in this capacity I should go—not as an emissary of the British Government, but in my capacity of an outsider and a Boer. And Lloyd George was to take no part in the business—everything was to be left in my hands—I was to explore the position, see if peace could be brought about, say and do whatever I chose towards this end.

‘No one else knew. Not another member of the Cabinet. Not the police. Nobody. We kept it an absolute secret.

‘I went’ (says Smuts innocently, with his Boer accent) ‘as Mr. Smith. In the Austrian business, when I met Mensdorff about a separate peace, I also went as Mr. Smith.’

### 6

‘His rebel friends’, as Smuts calls them, knew he was coming, but they did not know he was coming as Mr. Smith. They met the ship at Kingstown and enquired for a General Smuts. No one had any information about a General Smuts and Smuts himself was in his cabin waiting for the activities of the ship’s arrival to be done, and the rebel friends accordingly went away thinking he had not kept his engagement.

After an hour or two Smuts left the ship, walked to the



quay, hailed a taxi, and asked to be driven to Dublin. 'Don't you know', said the taxi-driver, 'that it's dangerous to go to Dublin?' 'Dangerous to go seven miles!' said Smuts. 'They shoot,' said the taxi-driver. 'That's just talk,' said Smuts. 'You carry on.'

Halfway to Dublin a tyre burst with an enormous report and Smuts thought for a moment that really they had been shot at. However, they changed the tyre, and Smuts duly reached Dublin, and drove to the Guildhall to see the Lord Mayor (McNeill) who was a leading rebel. He explained his mission, and the Lord Mayor told him they had given him up—thought he had not arrived—but de Valera and the other leading rebels were secretly in Dublin, waiting for him, at the house of a friend of de Valera—a doctor. To this house, on the outskirts of Dublin, they took Smuts.

'I found there,' says Smuts, 'de Valera, Erskine Childers, Arthur Griffith and some others. Not Tom Casement. He wasn't among the leaders. And I was particularly interested to see Griffith because before the Boer War Griffith had been a journalist in Johannesburg, and he knew at first hand the sort of things I had to tell them—he could endorse my appeal. Griffith's being there made things much easier for me, it made the atmosphere intimate and sympathetic.'

'We discussed the situation. The line I took was this: It was a mistake, I said, to go on with the rebellion, because it could lead nowhere; England was bound to suppress it—the Irish couldn't withstand England—no one else would help them—they would simply waste their strength and resources and ruin Ireland.'

'I knew, of course, that the English Government were hardly less anxious than the Irish themselves to come to a settlement—the King's speech had been made to that end, I was here to that end. What we had to consider was not

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whether there should be a settlement—naturally everyone wanted a settlement—but the nature of that settlement.

‘I said to them: “Now what do you want?”’

‘They said: “We want a republic.”’

“Well,” I said, “let us consider this matter of a republic. Assume it is possible for you to get your republic. Still, Britain remains next door to you. Do you think Britain will make no conditions for her own defence? Do you think she will allow you or anyone else to use your harbours to her own detriment?”’

‘They said they wouldn’t let any foreign power use their harbours, and they had no idea of establishing an Irish navy.’

“But then again,” I said, “England will want facilities for her own navy. She will expect to use your harbours and waters herself. You appreciate that, I suppose?”’

‘They said they did.’

“You will have to agree to it, of course.”

‘They wouldn’t think it unreasonable, they said.’

“So you will make a Treaty with England to that effect?”’

‘They presumed they would have to.’

And here, says Smuts, was what he wanted. Now he could make his point.

### 7

He told the rebels he knew just the sort of republic they were after. Of such a republic he had once been Attorney General. It was a republic, he said, that had great powers but was bound by a Convention to England.

‘Now what you want is a copy of our old Transvaal Republic. You want the trouble we had. You want our sort of relationship with England under which, you can take it from me, we never felt ourselves really independent and which, in the end, led to war. Your story will be our story.’

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A treaty—a treaty you can't avoid—will be the death of you as it was the death of us.'

He went on to describe the present position of the Boers under Dominion status—how everyone was happy in South Africa.

He forgot, in his enthusiasm, his own experiences since South Africa had become a Dominion: the two elections fought on the secession issue, the struggles, the shifts, the pains, the fratricidal passions. . . . ('He has sold our right for a mess of pottage, shut the door in the face of our independence. . . .') 'This is the way General Smuts proposes to lead us to greatness: the way of external and internal war, of persecution, of treading down the freedom of his fellow man, fellow citizen and fellow Boer. . . . 'We are being sucked dry by the Empire. . . . 'General Smuts' policy has brought South Africa to the verge of ruin. . . . 'If you people are determined to continue wallowing in the mire of racialism Pretoria West had better begin to look for another representative and the country for another Premier. . . . 'I am like the Apostle Paul. I perish daily.' . . .)—he forgot such things as these. He did forget them. He can forget them. His watchword is not simply his countrymen's watchword: 'Alles sal reg kom'—'It will all come right.' Everything, he declares, *is* right. For, normally, the right things are so right to Smuts, he can see them in his mind so clearly, they are so bound to come—to him they are already there: hidden perhaps, delayed perhaps, but surely there. 'Why,' he says, 'if I didn't believe that, I wouldn't want to live. What is anything worth if you can't believe that?'

As for the wrong things—those are only current politics, temporary maladjustments, indelicate really to mention outside the home.

So, naturally, South Africa was a happy dominion. How

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could any dominion in the British Commonwealth be other than a happy dominion?

He described to the Irish rebels the meaning and scope of Dominion status.

It meant, he said, the fullest freedom internally and externally. It meant friendship with the Sister Dominions, a mutual helping hand.

There was, of course, the business of a common king. But how did that hinder freedom? In actual fact, whatever the name, one was freer in a dominion than under a republic—absolutely, limitlessly free—not hampered by treaties that were bound to lead to misunderstandings and complications.

‘What was our position as a republic? What dignity had we in the world? Who regarded us? But at Paris, as a dominion, we were the equals of any country in the world, our signature had as much meaning.

‘Make no mistake about it, you have more privilege, more power, more peace, more security in such a sisterhood of equal nations than in a small, nervous republic having all the time to rely on the goodwill, and perhaps the assistance, of foreigners.

‘What sort of independence do you call that? By comparison with real independence it is a shadow. You sell the fact for the name.’

### 8

It is when Smuts speaks of commonwealth, co-operation, league, union, fusion, brotherhood, holism, universe—all the forms of oneness—that he is most impassioned and also most convincing.

Who, after all, should know better than Smuts—so independent of others—that the saddest of all dependencies is dependence on oneself alone? Who better than one

who remains, as he says, unassembled, the value of being whole?

Is it not, indeed, a manifestation of his persistent, ever frustrated, desire to be one man within that Smuts should always be driven externally towards this grail of unity? . . .

'I could see', says Smuts, 'I was making an impression. Griffith was with me. He was, in fact, the first man to take my point that there was greater freedom in Dominion status than in a republic committed to a treaty vitally binding it to England. He supported me. He stood by the Free State principle till he dropped dead. . . . We argued all morning, all afternoon, and till late in the night, and the men I found most difficult to convince were de Valera and Childers. I couldn't convince them. Childers was worse than de Valera. He was positively hostile. De Valera was not so much hostile as suspicious. He absolutely distrusted England. He backed his distrust with examples of England's perfidy going back to Cromwell.

'I didn't try to force the pace. Still, we came finally to business. I asked them if they would agree to an immediate armistice with the military now in Ireland, and a conference with the British Government. I told them I was speaking unofficially, but I was sure, I said, an armistice could be arranged within twenty-four hours. And, although I had not mentioned Dominion status to Lloyd George before leaving England, they could explore with the British Government, I said, the relative merits of a republic and Dominion status. And then, presently, we would try to get the North to the conference.

'They agreed before I left.

'I reported to Lloyd George. The armistice was arranged. Invitations were sent to the conference. De Valera came to London. Then a mission came. And at that stage I dropped out. My return to South Africa was already overdue. You

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know the troubles we were having in South Africa. I couldn't delay any longer. But before I left I put on record my ideas about the matter of Dominion status for Ireland.'

On his return to South Africa a private letter told Smuts that, but for the armistice, eight hundred specially selected men had orders to shoot every uniformed British agent in the streets of Dublin at a certain hour.

### 9

Here are Smuts' thoughts about Dominion status for Ireland:

'I believe', he wrote, 'that it is in the interest of Ulster to come in, and that the force of community interests will, over a period of years, prove so great and compelling that Ulster will herself decide to join the Irish State. But at present an Irish settlement is only possible if the hard facts are calmly faced and Ulster is left alone. Not only will she not consent to come in, but, even if she does, the Irish State will, I fear, start under such a handicap of internal friction and discordance that the result may well be a failure once more.

'My strong advice to you is to leave Ulster alone for the present as the only line along which a solution is practicable; to concentrate on a free constitution for the remaining twenty-six counties, and, through a successful running of the Irish Free State and the pull of economic and other peaceful forces, eventually to bring Ulster into that State. The wise man, while fighting for his ideal to the uttermost, learns also to bow to the inevitable. And a humble acceptance of the facts is often the only way of finally overcoming them. It proved so in South Africa, where ultimate unity was only realised through several stages and a process of years; and where the Republican ideal for which we had

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made unheard-of sacrifices had ultimately to give way to another form of freedom.

‘My belief is that Ireland is travelling the same painful road as South Africa, and that with wisdom and moderation in her leadership she is destined to achieve no less success. . . .

‘Freedom will lead inevitably to unity; therefore, begin with freedom—with a free constitution for twenty-six counties as the first and most important step in the whole settlement.

‘As to the form of that freedom, here, too, you are called upon to choose between two alternatives. To you, as you say, the Republic is the true expression of national self-determination. That is not the only expression; and it is an expression which means your final and irrevocable severance from the British League. And to this, as you know, the Parliament and people of this country will not agree.

‘The British Prime Minister has made you an offer: of the other form of freedom—of Dominion status—which is working with complete success in all parts of the British League. Important British Ministers have described Dominion status in terms which must satisfy all you could legitimately wish for. . . . You are no longer offered a Home Rule scheme of the Gladstone or Asquith type, with its limited powers, and reservations of a fundamental character. Full Dominion status with all it is and implies is yours—if you will but take it. It is far more than was offered the Transvaal and the Free State, who fought for freedom one of the greatest wars in the history of Great Britain, and one which reduced their own countries to ashes and their little people to ruins. . . . What they have finally achieved, after years of warfare and political evolution, is now offered to you—not in doles or instalments but at once and completely. If, as I hope, you accept, you will become a Sister Do-

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minion in a great circle of equal states, who will stand beside you and shield you and protect your new rights as if these were their own rights.

'I pray to God that you may be wisely guided and that peace may now be concluded before tempers again change and perhaps another generation of strife ensues.'

The day after writing this Smuts sailed for South Africa, and his ship caught fire.

The Sinn Feiners suspected that some sort of sinister motive inhabited this wise and noble document, that its real object was to prejudice Ireland's case and that to publish it was a breach of good taste.

Mr. de Valera's comment was that the various rights and privileges of Dominion status could be summed up in one sentence: 'The right to secede', and that Ireland could never agree to British naval control of Irish waters and ports, or control of the air over Ireland, for both these conditions implied the occupation of Ireland by the British army and this made Ireland a military dependency of England. And when Smuts landed in Cape Town on August 31st he was immediately asked whether he considered the Irish negotiations a failure, but he answered:

'I do not want you to be under the impression that what I have done has been a failure, a splendid failure, a well-intentioned move, but a failure. It has not been a failure, and in the end I feel persuaded success will come to the movement that has been set going.'

Already, in fact, Mr. de Valera had signed a truce with the mere comment: 'Our respective positions have been understood'; a conference followed in London; in December Smuts received a cable saying that everything was formally settled: Southern Ireland (although, in the end, Mr. de Valera stood out) was to have Dominion status and to be called the Irish Free State.



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When the King died Smuts spoke, as always, of 'his wisdom and patience, his modesty and unselfishness, his love for his people and his high sense of duty'. 'I had the good fortune', he said, 'to come very close to him, . . . the honour to be called his friend.' And he recalled too, in public, what the King had done in Ireland and how it had affected, in its result, the whole question of Imperial status. But of his own work towards that result he said nothing. . . .

Bad days came upon him. Ignorant and forgetting South Africans asked what Smuts had ever *done* that one should think very well of him—his greatest achievement since the war remained in its essentials unknown to them.

Except for Ireland, except for his triumph in 1923 over the Ruhr business, not a thing in his life as a statesman went right for Smuts from the moment of his return to South Africa after the Great War.

## Chapter XXXV

### 'THE WORLD IS NOT FIT FOR THE LEAGUE'

#### I

There was, to begin with, the death of Botha; and, in the same month, even while pleading for the Treaty and the League, the breakdown of Wilson. In March, 1921, Wilson was due to retire from his office of President, and against this event the *New York Evening Post* asked Smuts to write a 'personal estimate' of Wilson. He wrote it for free distribution to the leading papers of the United States and it appeared on February 28th.

He began his essay with the quotation from Mommsen that he had written in Mrs. Asquith's book: 'On those whom the gods love they lavish infinite joys, and infinite sorrows'; and he described how Wilson, two years ago not only leader of the world's greatest state, but centre of the world's most poignant hopes, was now trampled to an end by his own people.

Wilson's position at the beginning of the Peace Conference, he said, was 'terrible in its greatness. It was a terrible position for any mere man to occupy.' Never before in history had a whole humanity, he said, so utterly rested on one man. 'He was supposed to possess the secret which would remake the world on fairer lines. The peace Wilson was bringing was expected to be God's peace. . . .

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'In this atmosphere of extravagant, almost frenzied expectation he arrived at the Paris Peace Conference. He plunged into that Inferno of human passions.' Six months passed. The world went rapidly down. The Peace Treaty came forth . . . 'not a Wilson peace. . . . Not so had the world understood him. This was a Punic peace, the same sort of peace as the victor had dictated to the vanquished for thousands of years. . . .

'Round him the hopes had centred. Round him the disillusion and despair now gathered. . . .' He became, went on Smuts, the world's scapegoat. 'His friends were silenced in the universal disappointment. Little or nothing had been expected from the other leaders—the whole failure was put to the account of Woodrow Wilson. And finally America for reasons of her own joined the pack and at the end it was his own people who tore him to pieces. . . .'

'Let us admit the truth. . . . It was not Wilson who failed, the position is much more serious. It was the human spirit itself that failed. . . . It was not the statesmen that failed so much as the spirit of the peoples behind them. . . .

'Knowing the Peace Conference as I knew it from within, I feel convinced in my own mind that not the greatest man born of woman in the history of the race could have saved the situation. . . . Sincerely as we believed in the moral ideals for which we had fought, the temptation at Paris of a large booty to be divided proved too great. In the end not only the leaders but the people preferred a bit of booty here, a strategic frontier there, a coalfield or an oil well, an addition to their population or their resources to all the faint allurements of the ideal. . . .

'What was really saved at Paris was the Covenant of the League of Nations. The political realists who had their eye on the loot were prepared—however reluctantly—to throw that innocent little sop to President Wilson and his fellow

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idealists. After all, there was no harm in it, it threatened no national interest, and it gave great pleasure to a number of good unpractical people in most countries.

‘Above all, President Wilson had to be conciliated, and this was the last and the greatest of the Fourteen Points on which he had set his heart and by which he was determined to stand or fall. And so he got his way. But it is a fact that only a man of his great power and influence and dogged determination could have carried the Covenant through the Peace Conference. Others had seen with him the great vision. Others had perhaps given more thought to the elaboration of the great plan. But his was the power and the will that carried it through. The Covenant is Wilson’s souvenir to the future of the world. No one will ever deny him that honour.

‘The honour is very great indeed, for the Covenant is one of the great creative documents in human history. The Peace Treaty will fade into merciful oblivion . . . but the Covenant will stand as sure as fate. . . . And the leader who, in spite of apparent failure, succeeded in inscribing his name on that banner has achieved the most enviable and enduring immortality. Americans of the future will yet proudly and gratefully rank him with Washington and Lincoln, and his fame will have a more universal significance than theirs.’

Smuts’ prophecy that the League alone would remain of the Peace Treaty has, to a great extent, been justified. But whether Wilson entirely wanted to ‘save the situation’, or agreed with Smuts, that it so desperately needed saving, is another question. Smuts’ idea—the excuse sometimes offered for Wilson: that he acquiesced in a Peace he abhorred solely for the sake of the League—is not borne out by Wilson’s own declarations. Those declarations suggest that he upheld the Peace not only because it contained the League but because, in principle, if not in detail, he believed in the

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Peace itself. Where the Peace did embarrass him, where he knew it failed, was not where Smuts held it failed: Wilson was repentant not over Germany but (for both moral and political reasons) over China. To suggest that Wilson went about the United States passionately upholding a Peace he detested is to charge him with quite a fresh dereliction.

And there is this direct proof that he stood by the Peace till his end: the Baruch cable, endorsed by him, which begged Smuts to support the fulfilment of the Reparation clauses—the hardest clauses in the Treaty, but yet not clauses on which the League depended.

However, Smuts himself is not so vehement about the Peace as he used to be. ‘I have tamed down,’ he says. ‘One tames down.’

He sent his article with a letter to Wilson, and Wilson replied:

‘My dear Friend,

‘It was a great pleasure to hear from you through your letter of the fourth of January, and the paper you enclosed gave me, you may be sure, the deepest gratification. I know of no one I have met whose opinion I value more than I value yours. I wish there might be someone to write discerningly and with knowledge of your own actions and influence at the Peace Conference, which were wholly admirable.

‘With the most cordial and affectionate good wishes,

‘Sincerely yours,

‘Woodrow Wilson.’

2

Although, according to Smuts’ Holism, human personality is the high achievement of life, and although he believes the worth of life to be the freedom of the individual,

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when it comes to his own inclinations, a man is to Smuts rather less a man than what he stands for.

And so when Smuts thinks of Wilson, he thinks of the League, he thinks of Wilson as the matrix of the League. And when he upholds Wilson he upholds the League. And when he is indignant at America's treatment of Wilson he is indignant at America's treatment of the creator of the League.

It was part of the bitterness he was tasting everywhere that America should reject the League.

He had not thought it possible after Wilson's assurances at Paris. To him, not less than to all the world, Wilson had seemed a being with the power of a god. When he asked Wilson '*Can you carry the Treaty? Can you get your two-thirds majority?*' and Wilson answered 'I absolutely can', it was as if America's acceptance of the Treaty (which to Smuts meant the League) was already an accomplished fact.

Three months after his return to South Africa from the Peace Conference, as he was rushing about the country appealing against hatred and dissension, he heard that the League was in danger in the American Senate. 'I can scarcely believe it', he said. 'May I', he asked from the little Wesleyan Hall in Johannesburg that furnished him his occasion, 'may I send a message from South Africa to America? My people are small, my voice on their behalf is weak, but the greatest leaders of America have before now listened to me, and I trust that my appeal will not be resented. I appeal to America not to blast the hopes of the world. . . . When human freedom was in danger . . . she came with her overwhelming resources to the rescue of the great ideals for which all the Allies were fighting; and her great act of unselfishness and moral idealism, at the most critical stage of the war, saved the world for democracy.'

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‘To-day the world is no less in danger. The machinery of the League is wanted to save civilisation. . . . It alone can save tottering Europe. . . . The other nations have approved it. . . . I can’t believe that America will now block the way: that a purely American point of view, after all that has happened, will be allowed to override the wider interests and necessities of civilisation. In the greatest crisis in history, America proved true to the best human ideals of free and peaceful Government. She can only be true to herself by remaining true to these ideals, embodied in the League for the whole human race. It is in the power of America to lift the heavy weight of despair which is to-day bearing down Christendom. . . .’

But the private letters he had from America during the next few years reported that America was ‘in a madly jingo mood’; that America was not concerned about the League, partly for political reasons, but also because the war had not really hurt the American masses. ‘Their brief and victorious experience taught them no lesson. They despise the rest of the world, and are not in a mood to go to arbitration concerning anything they want or imagine they want. They prefer to take it.’

They did not, in short, want the League because, as it seemed to them, they did not need it.

Smuts’ feeling for the League overrode even his feeling for Wilson. Despite his passionate defence of Wilson in the American papers, he could not help saying, at the Imperial Conference he attended a few months later, that Wilson had ‘mismanaged this question grievously, with the result that it became a party question.’

He begged the British delegates, at the same time, not to desert the League because America had deserted it. ‘The League is our work: the League was hammered out by British representatives in conjunction with America. If

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there is anything in the Peace Treaty which is a product of what I may call Anglo-Saxon ideas, it is the League of Nations, and I think we are pledged in honour to defend it, to defend our work and give it every chance possible. It has fallen on evil days; it is a child born in an evil time; the world is not fit for democracy, nor is the world fit for the League, but it is only a part of the great disillusionment and disappointment that has come over the world. That is no reason why we should become disheartened. . . . I think it is the real hope of the world, that the League may acquire such moral authority, may have such a backing of public opinion behind it, that the Governments of the world, great and small, will listen to the judgment of its Council and its Assembly.’

‘What,’ he came back to say in South Africa, ‘what will happen if in another fifty years war should break out again? It is not only chemistry. It is our conquest of the air which will lead to a tremendous intensification of the horrors of war, when aeroplanes will move at the rate of many hundred miles an hour, and bombs will be thrown compared with which the bombs used in the last war will be nothing. . . . Have we to drift along? Have we simply to say that human nature cannot be altered and that men will fight it out and therefore let us drift along and try these methods once more in some future ordeal? Have we to proceed on these lines? Have we no regard for human destiny? . . .

‘And that is not all. Terrible as it is in its application and use of all the inventions of science, there is another aspect of war which is even more devastating. That is, its economic effects. . . .

‘Mankind is one, and civilisation is one, and if a war takes place and a forcible separation occurs between nations you sever relations to such an extent and cause such confusion



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that the economic effects are perhaps even more dreadful than the events and suffering of war itself.

'It is because of this feeling and conviction that the League of Nations was begun.'

Many people are to-day saying the things Smuts said in 1921. But Smuts said them in 1921, and in all the years after when it was as fashionable to decry the League as it is now fashionable to decry the Peace Treaty of which it is a part.

He said them even when what the eye and the spirit saw were two different things; when it seemed a juggling with reason to say them—so that often he found himself in the illogical position which is the fate of idealists who have to work with life as it is; which is his own persistent fate because of that disunion within himself; where he has to cry woe! on a bad world and yet maintain that out of evil, especially out of evil, will come good.

'Where do we stand to-day?' he said concerning the League, at the time of the Ruhr occupation. 'What has become of those principles for which the great price was paid? The exultation is gone, the moral idealism has disappeared before a cynical realism. Our promises to our peoples, our vows to God, our sacred obligations to the dead—they are all forgotten. Vilna, the Ruhr, Corfu—they stand written in flaming letters across the skies of our hopes and dreams for the future.'

'There is not a principle of the Covenant which has not been trampled underfoot. The nations have not been true to their word; they have not been faithful to the work of their dead. . . . Everywhere there is the denial of the human spirit. . . .'

'Yet I have the conviction', he protested also, 'that out of all this evil good will come. . . . The great moral causes of humanity have not been born in victory, but in defeat.'

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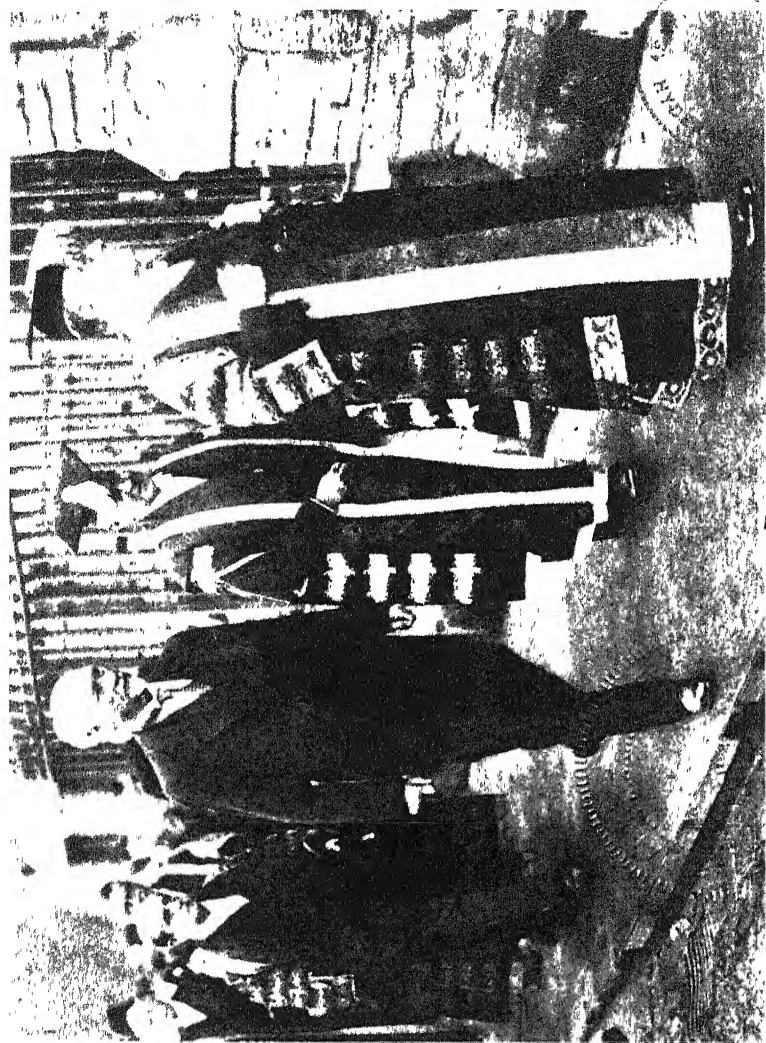
We are all defeated to-day. . . . We have lost ground since the writing of the Covenant, but the great reinforcements are coming—God’s army also is on the march.

‘Perhaps things had to come to the dreadful pass in which Europe finds herself to-day before the change for the better could take place. The great causes move forward by their own momentum. . . .’

Nevertheless, eleven years later, in his Rectorial address at St. Andrews he still had to speak as in 1923. He had to say that ‘democracy, with its promise of international peace, has been no better guarantee against war than the old dynastic rule of the kings. . . . We console ourselves with the truism that we are living in the most interesting times. The hard truth is that they are the most anxious and critical times which mankind has faced for many centuries. . . . There is a decay of principle which is eating at the very vitals of free government. . . . Men and women have suffered until they are abdicating their rights as individuals. In their misery and helplessness they are surrendering to a mass will which leads straight to autocracy. Of what we call liberty in its full human meaning . . . there is less in Europe than there has been during the last two thousand years.’

Yet as ever, too, he was bound by his philosophy of ‘Alles sal reg kom’ to add that ‘mankind is no longer held back by ancient taboos, but is valiantly exploring new ways to a better future. . . . What is highest in us is deepest in the nature of things. As virtue is its own reward, so life carries its own sanctions and the guarantee of its highest fulfilment and perfection. That is my ultimate credo. . . . I remain at heart an optimist.’

People who believe in a future world are often harsher than people who do not, because if one has all eternity to



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play with what can a little more sorrow matter in this world?

Smuts does not fall into exactly this category: he is sensitive to suffering. But as he always takes what he calls 'the long view', his hopes can never fail before the facts of the day—sooner or later things *must* come right.

And although he takes the long view of injuries to himself as well as to the rest of the world, can bear not only other people's troubles but his own, is, perhaps, the greater statesman for ignoring the trivial moment, there are South Africans who think that this persistent hopefulness of Smuts is responsible for a number of their misfortunes.

Seven months after Smuts' return from the 1921 Imperial Conference and his triumph in Ireland, General Hertzog found cause to express himself on Smuts' capacity to wait in terms not altogether benevolent. 'The Premier sat still and incited the men: he shot them down with one object—that he might sit behind the tortoise to stick his fork into its head when it should put that head out. . . . Did the Prime Minister in his statement display any sense of justice—did he by "allowing the situation to develop" display any care for the future, any anxiety lest innocent people should be killed? He was totally unconcerned and careless about innocent people being killed.'

General Hertzog was referring to the results of the Rand Revolution of 1922.

Smuts himself said on his return to South Africa: 'Here we have our little troubles, and sometimes we magnify them so that there seems no country in the world under such a mountain of trouble. But when you see what a load is carried elsewhere, what insoluble problems, baffling human ingenuity, you are grateful to be here and to belong to this community and South Africa.'

It was the sort of thing he told people overseas too, the

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sort of thing he so wanted to believe that sheer belief, it almost seemed to him, could encompass it.

Nevertheless, there were troubles growing under the sun of Africa that could not have been much lighter than those in other countries, and insoluble problems too.

The insoluble problems had begun on the day white men met black men in South Africa. Many of the others had begun before the Great War, and even before the Boer War.

But, speaking in a particular sort of way, on the very eve of the Great War there were Indian troubles, bloody strikes in Johannesburg, and disunion, subterranean as well as overt, among those newly united.

## Chapter XXXVI

### KAFFIR MILLENNIUM

#### I

Concerning the war itself Smuts had said, in its second month: 'Though, apparently, we stand outside and at some distance from the actual conflict, yet, at any moment . . . we may be drawn into the vortex.' And, even as he spoke, he knew South Africans would have to go against the Germans who were their neighbours; and before the year was out there was civil war in South Africa; and presently South Africans went to German South-West and German East Africa and all the time they were fighting overseas.

And these things did not end in themselves: they brought about the same results that were brought about everywhere: a different way of living and a different way of thinking; fewer assets yet increased demands; a breed of men changed by the war, and accelerating the change the war had brought about too in the society they inhabited.

For these men, returned from the war, were not only saddened and calloused, but, still worse, regimented. For four years it had not been necessary or desirable or even possible for them to exercise their minds. They had done as they were told, their daily bread was the business of others, their fates were in the hands of others, their unconsidered lives were routine—was there any use in thinking?

What a relief, indeed, in this unthinkable world, not to think.

Regimentation became the order of life: the war had trained to it even those who stayed at home. And although, after the war, there seemed to be a great individual shouting, that was only the clatter to drive away evil spirits. In their hearts people were afraid—more than anything afraid to act without instructions or alone.

Everywhere people did things in mobs.

South Africans, no less than the inhabitants of other countries, went about in mobs.

## 2

Another reason why mobs existed was that often returned soldiers had no other refuge; or if they had another refuge, it was at the expense of their substitutes during the war—in which case the ex-substitutes joined the mobs. Here, no less than in the war, was a fight for life. The men, saddened, calloused and regimented, coming back to find no place for them; the men, cosy in the soldiers' jobs, told suddenly to get out again.

Involved also were the harassed employers, not knowing how to accommodate this superfluity of men—whom to keep, whom to dismiss.

In South Africa the labour conditions had their own peculiarities. . . .

There are in the Union of South Africa two great coherent bodies of labour: the mines, coal and gold, situated in the Transvaal, with Johannesburg as their centre; and the state-owned railways, whose workshop in Pretoria is thirty-seven miles from Johannesburg.

Now, when the mines first began, most of the miners had been imported from the mines in England—Cornishmen many of them were. Some of these went home and some



grew old and some died of miners' phthisis, and they were replaced by South Africans, English and Dutch.

The war came; and as most of the Dutch were against the war, it was the English rather than the Dutch who went to fight, and their substitutes were mostly young backveld Boers—unaccustomed to work, to money, to city life, or to organisations like trades unions. They were, however (which Boer is not?), accustomed to politics and they were inflamed by the civil war of 1914.

The railway workshops were also full now of young backvelders. Every industry in the Transvaal became full of young backvelders. A judicial commission that enquired into the Proclamation of Martial Law during the Rand Revolution of 1922 computed that seventy-five per cent of all the labour forces on the Rand were Dutch South Africans.

They all joined the trades unions.

Originally the South African unions had followed the model of the English unions. But now they differed from their exemplars in two extraordinary respects. Since their members were mostly Dutch of the type sympathetic to General Hertzog, the political affiliations of the unions were not only with the official Labour Party but also with what was, in effect, a Tory Party. Then their fundamental principle was the oppression of the real workers of the country—the natives. They talked all the time about the colour bar.

The trades unions grew in numbers, power and fury. The feeling of the war was in them, and they were fired by the rise of the proletariat in every defeated country in Europe, and in particular by the triumph of proletariat Russia. One reason why Smuts thinks of Bolshevism with less sympathy than he might is that he has had a sample of it in Johannesburg.

However, South Africa will be the last stronghold against communism. For, when it comes to the point, communists—white communists—will discover that the natives are the proletariat of South Africa, and that will be the end of proletarian ideas in South Africa.

## 3

The communist agitation in Johannesburg called itself actually a strike, and it began with a strike about wages and other labour conditions. But its most insistent purpose was, as it happened, the intention of stabilising, once for all, an aristocracy—the aristocracy of white over black.

The cry of the Johannesburg communists was the colour bar, their demand the complete submergence of black workers, their bravest banner a white South Africa. For while soldiers returning home in other lands had an economic problem to consider, in South Africa the problem was racial: it had been discovered, during their absence in the war, that a good deal of their work could be done quite well by black men at a tenth of the cost.

What was more, the natives themselves had been shaken by the war into consciousness of their misfortunes, rights and powers; many of them had been overseas in labour corps; foreign communist agitators, it was said, were at work among them.

Since it is not likely that, for many years to come, the natives of South Africa will have any power against the Europeans, Smuts dared justly class them among the comparatively 'little troubles' that faced South Africa after the war.

Yet if, unlike Smuts, one felt inclined to be nervous about things, one might choose to be nervous about the rise of the natives. And certainly they created an additional, poignant trouble other countries had not.

There were native strikes at Bloemfontein, Pretoria and Johannesburg in 1919, and in 1920 seventy-one thousand natives in the Rand mines asked for more pay and downed tools.

Then, early in 1920, the natives of Port Elizabeth formed a Native Labour Union, pointed out that the cost of living since the war was up a hundred per cent but their wages only sixty per cent and demanded for adult males an increase of wages from four shillings to ten shillings a day, and for adult females a rate of seven and sixpence a day. The President of their union urged them to strike, and was arrested and imprisoned without a warrant. Outside his prison several hundreds of natives, armed with sticks, made a demonstration. A crowd of three thousand onlookers gathered. A jet of water was used to disperse the natives, who retaliated with stones. The inevitable first shot was fired by the usual undiscovered person. There was a stampede. The police fired. Six Europeans were killed and wounded, and sixty-eight natives; and Smuts was blamed in Parliament for the occurrence.

Then in 1920 there was another manifestation among the natives of the way the whole world was being driven to madness: religious this time. It occurred in the Cape Province, not far from the spot where, sixty-five years before, a black Joan of Arc had arisen among a tribe called the AmaXosa, the Xosa people. Spirit voices had told Nongkwasi that if the AmaXosa destroyed all they owned, their ancestors would rise from the dead, and, bringing all due replenishment—not only of food, but of youth, beauty and strength—help them drive the white invaders in the sea. . . .

The AmaXosa obeyed the instructions of the spirit voices, and died of starvation or ate the dead. The white

invaders succoured whom they could, and that was the end of the AmaXosa.

Now, at a place called Bullhoek, among people also speaking the Xosa language, spirits were busy again. Not heathen spirits though. These spirits had the authority of the Bible.

## 5

Thirty years before a new negro sect had appeared in America called the Church of God and Saints of Christ. It had a prophet and, making no risky distinctions between the Old and the New Testaments, wisely adopted both Jewish and Christian ritual.

A South African native, a Wesleyan Methodist preacher dismissed from his church, visited America, found sanctuary in the new religion, and returned to South Africa—a bishop now—to spread it.

The African natives like religion. There are over two hundred and fifty Christian sects among them, and many profess Mohammedanism. They were delighted with the comprehensive character of the new religion, and they added to it a bit of native belief, and so trebly assured salvation. Both Saturday and Sunday were Sabbaths. Easter was observed and also the Jewish Passover. There was baptism by total immersion at midnight and a kiss of peace. The rise of the black people, under the blessing of their ancestral spirits, was to bring in the millennium.

The bishop died and the sect was split in two. A certain Enoch guided one of the groups, and he had official permission to celebrate the Passover at a place called Bullhoek. Every year, for three years, he and his followers came, with their women and children, their animals and grain, to feast at Bullhoek; and in a few weeks they departed.

Then in 1920 they came to Bullhoek as usual, but it be-

gan to seem that they were not departing. Local authorities remonstrated with them, and they pleaded special services, sickness, and inability to pay their train fares. The months ran on, and still they were there, calling themselves Israelites and Enoch their prophet, but adopting now, in addition to their other tenets, the Indian principle of passive resistance. They offered no force, but they accepted no orders. They isolated themselves; refused to give their names; refused to notify births, deaths or contagious diseases; refused to obey the court's subpoenas; tolerated no white intrusion; posted guards over the entrance to their camp, and notices in English and Xosa saying: 'Halt!—No admittance.'

They were still there in December. The non-Israelite natives said their wives and children were being lured away. The white people said their cattle were disappearing and what would be the end of the business?—something serious, they imagined. The Government offered to send the Israelites home by train, with food for their journey. The Israelites said they *could* not go: they had a pact with God.

A force of police came and were ordered off by the prophet. They went.

April of 1921 arrived, and Government emissaries—to save the white man's face—offered the Israelites, on certain conditions, the legal right to remain at Bullhoek.

The Israelites said they respected the law of the land and wished to injure no one, but God was above the law of the land; their dealings were with God; they had God's authority, through Enoch, his prophet, to stay where they were, and they would go when God told them.

In the circumstances they could not, they regretted, inform the Government how much longer they intended staying at Bullhoek. The matter was not in their earthly hands. They were here awaiting fulfilment of God's pro-

mise, according to the Scriptures, to gather his people together; and since this gathering together meant the end of the world and most terrible punishment for unbelievers, they obviously faced the highest risk, in this issue between God and the Government, if they chose not to believe God.

It may be that abler negotiators could have produced different results. However, after a month of parleying, the Israelites were still at Bullhoek; their cattle and grain ending; unnotified diseases spreading among them; their terror and terrorisation bound ultimately to menace the countryside.

It came to force. The troops of the Government advanced upon the legions of God, robed in white, their prophet in scarlet, now actively resisting to cries of 'God will fight with us.'

Machine guns against assegais. On the Government's side a European was stabbed and the horse and trooper killed. On God's side nearly three hundred Kaffirs were killed and wounded and seventy-five taken prisoner.

The Automobile Club and hospital of a neighbouring town took and tended the wounded.

In Italy it was reported that the Jews of South Africa had risen against the Government. In Moscow Smuts was referred to as the Butcher of Bullhoek.

In the Union House Smuts, due to sail next day for the Imperial Conference, spent his fifty-first birthday answering the accusations made against him by the Nationalists on account of Bullhoek:

'We did our best to prevent it. . . . After protracted conversations and attempts to make them understand what the position was, they persisted in an attitude that amounted to defiance.

'They did so on religious grounds, assuming they were under the protection of Jehovah, and that neither civil

authority nor any law could interfere with their obedience to the Divine Word. . . .

'It was explained fully that the Government was not out to suppress any religion, however wrong and outrageous it might be. That was a matter for the conscience of the people. But the Government was going to see the law carried out. . . . And after this statement had been made and circulated, the police were authorised to go forward to Bullhoek. The instructions given were not to resort to bloodshed, except in the very last—the ultimate—resort. These instructions were carried out to the letter. The police reserved their fire until the last moment. It was a case of so many hundreds of police well-armed, and so many thousands of poor deluded natives, armed with such weapons as they had, but they came out and seemed determined to swamp the police and there was no alternative. . . .'

One of the reasons the Johannesburg revolutionaries gave for coming out on a general strike was that the natives had imperatively to be kept down. They pointed to the way they were rising all over the country—Bloemfontein, Pretoria, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and, in its own way, Bullhoek, and they said they had to preserve the status of white South Africa.

Their opponents, considering the same events, said the revolutionaries themselves would precipitate the rising of the natives and the breakdown of white South Africa.

Smuts said: 'The country has been flooded with a campaign of misstatements about the colour bar, and numbers of public spirited citizens have been worked up into a state of great anxiety to protect the colour bar.

'The issue is not about the colour bar, but how to save the low grade mines from extinction. . . . No other principle is at stake.'

## Chapter XXXVII

### AFTER THE WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA

#### I

**I**t was characteristic of the state of things in South Africa, the accumulating hostility towards himself, that the first question asked Smuts on his return from the Imperial Conference and Ireland should have been whether his Irish intervention had turned out a failure.

Nor was he met, as he landed, only by dispiriting questions: things even more dispiriting met him: hundreds of unemployed—the same sort of unemployed, for the same sort of reasons, that were appearing in every country in the world. He said next day that he did not think they were right to boo him but, in their circumstances, he might have done the same.

However, that was on second thoughts. At the moment of heckling he was not so saintly.

‘I have just been’, he protested, ‘for some weeks in Europe.’

‘Yes, clearing up somebody else’s mess.’

‘I wish I could.’

‘What would Jesus Christ say to this?’

‘You are a very young man. You ought to be sitting on the school benches.’

‘He’s got to work at three and six a day.’

‘If you are a wise young man, you will continue to stick to the school benches.’



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'He's got a wife and two children.'

No laughter. . . .

'General Smuts, why does the rich man look down on the poor man who has fought for his country?'

'You know the tendency of human beings, my friend, to look down on one another.'

'No, no, no.'

'What? You don't deny you look down on the rich man?'

No laughter. . . .

'Don't expect from me what you do not honestly expect from any other human being. I can't turn a man into a woman. I can't turn depression into prosperity with the stroke of a pen. . . . I have been a poor farmer's boy. My sympathies are with the under dog. . . . Socialists and others of that kind talk a lot of claptrap. . . . If a man saves a few hundreds to put into a house or stock, he finds capital a very useful thing, as long as he does not use it for bad purposes.'

'You are doing that.'

'No. I am not a capitalist. . . . There is no panacea that will save the world. There is no kind of patent medicine for saving the world.'

'Socialism.'

'That was given in Russia.'

'Why don't you go there?'

'You would not be satisfied with that. You don't want me to go to Ireland. You don't want me to go to England. If I wanted to go to Heaven, you'd object. I could only satisfy you by going to the other place, and to that I prefer South Africa. . . . To-morrow, or the day after, I will have to issue a great appeal to this country to come to the rescue of the starving children of Russia.'

'We are starving here.'

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'You are not starving. You look well fed. Don't let us talk nonsense. There is no starvation in this country. . . .'

'Women are starving in this town. I will take you to a house where there is an old man on the verge of starvation, and an old woman doing washing.'

'Oh, don't let us talk nonsense.'

'I am treasurer of the Unemployed Committee. Three days last week I have had to issue clothing and food to families—a widow with five children and another coming into the world with not a scrap of covering for it. I say this is starvation!'

'Don't misunderstand me. I want to be fair. We are passing through difficult times—times of unemployment. No doubt you will find cases of hardship, and individual cases of starvation. But I am talking of the general situation. Don't let us lose our sense of perspective, and let us be honest.'

'You are not honest.'

'I am sorry to hear that. I try to be honest.'

A kind word:

'You have a difficult position to fill and you have my sympathy.'

'Thank you. I don't always get even that. If you sympathise with me, give me a chance to finish. . . .'

When he arrived in the Transvaal people thought he was not looking well. But Smuts hates to admit disability as he hates to admit a mistake or a misfortune. He assured them that he was 'absolutely fresh. Don't think I've come back tired. I feel as if there is new inspiration coming to me from this country and the people.'

He said it without apparent cynicism.

At a National Party lecture pictures were shown of small metal hooks. These metal hooks, it was said, were what the English, during the Boer War, used to put in the tinned beef they gave the women and children in the concentration camps. Other pictures exhibited the barbarity of British troops. Contrasting photographs showed Botha in the uniform of a Republican General and in the dress of a Privy Councillor. There was a photograph of de Wet—arrested and imprisoned by Smuts. For what? For obeying God's edict that one's neighbour's boundaries should not be removed, for his 'armed protest' against the invasion of German South-West Africa.

A Boer War photograph showed Smuts and other Boer officers—Smuts looking in an opposite direction from his companions. 'Here you have proof that twenty years ago General Smuts was not with his people. He looked the other way. His heart was turned in another direction.'

A professor at a theological college proposed a vote of thanks to the lecturer.

A deputation of civil servants came to Smuts to protest against the withdrawal of their war bonus.

'I spend my days', Smuts told them, 'in meeting deputations from all parts of the country who complain of the depression. . . . The Government cannot delay the action which has been dictated by the circumstances I have explained to you.'

The servants of the state-owned railways came about both the withdrawal of the war bonus and retrenchment, and these he told that the South Africa Act required the railways to be run on business principles.

## AFTER THE WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA

‘But there has been an increase of railway expenditure over the war period of ninety-five per cent . . . and most of this increase is accounted for by salaries, wages, allowances and war bonuses. . . . Necessity compels me as it compels you.’

Other deputations complained about increased taxation. The natives complained about increased taxation. The Johannesburg miners complained about everything: withdrawal of war bonus, reduction of wages, retrenchment, competing native labour, general mining conditions.

And, in those days, when the Johannesburg miners complained, it was well to listen.

There were those strikes of 1907, 1913 and 1914. Something even bigger was brewing now, that one could hardly call a strike, that went deeper than questions concerning wages, retrenchment and general mining conditions.

Yet not deeper than questions concerning natives.

For here was an affair not only industrial but social—involving not only the mines of Johannesburg but the Government of South Africa—an attempt to divert property rights and change control—the sort of thing one called a revolution.

## Chapter XXXVIII

### THE HOB-NAILED BOOT

#### I

**T**he Judicial Commission that duly enquired into the revolution found that, as far back as the deportations of 1914, circulars had been issued to trade unions saying the time was come to change this milk-and-water business for something with fire in it, and members had been requested 'to organise into commandoes.'

Then, during the war, while the Government was busy with the Boer Rebellion, with German South-West Africa, German East Africa, the fighting in Europe; while Botha was ill and Smuts was in Europe and all thoughts and efforts were in the world struggle, the trade unions grew until, in effect, they controlled the country.

South Africa's cardinal principle is the superiority of white over black. Since over three-quarters of the people in South Africa are black, any white man at all—any illiterate derelict with a white skin—is an aristocrat, 'baas', to the great majority of his fellow countrymen; an hereditary member, one might say, of the Upper House; the next man's peer.

Also there are in South Africa no idle rich—merely an idle poor; and, on the other hand, no great industries—except the gold mines.

There exists therefore in South Africa only one important well-defined social class—the miners: the white miners.

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A class war in South Africa can therefore come only through the mines.

The miners of Johannesburg are the foundation of the labour system of South Africa, and the support of the workers in lesser industries. If, before 1922, employers in any sort of federated industry hesitated or fumbled about granting demands, it had but to be whispered, 'The miners will come out in sympathy', and the employers incontinently succumbed. The workers themselves in these lesser industries went in terror of the mines. All sorts of meek souls, from house painters to tea-room girls, lived in a constant process of being 'pulled out' and then pushed back again.

But who directed the miners themselves? . . . Men, as it happened, outside the mines.

### 2

At the municipal station, which supplies Johannesburg with electric power, there work mechanics who receive the wages of mechanics but are very important, for, if they choose, they can leave the town (but not the mines—the mines get power elsewhere) without light, heat or anything else dependent on electricity.

Before 1922 they very strongly exercised their authority. Periodically they cut off light—so that cautious householders learnt to keep stocks of candles. They threatened to have water cut off—cautious householders filled baths and other utensils with water. They stopped trams—once, for a fortnight, poorer Johannesburg walked because a tramwayman was suspended for three days on account of insubordination. They threw out the Mayor and Corporation and for a few days ran the town for themselves.

The citizens of Johannesburg suffered their domination. Like the employers of labour and also their employed they knew the threat: 'The miners will come out in sympathy.'

The miners themselves were pricked to continual restlessness—sometimes by circumstances inevitably arising out of the progress and conclusion of the war, and sometimes by men wantonly using them for their own ends.

In 1920, average wages of gold miners were fifty-four per cent higher than in 1914—they were just on five hundred pounds a year. That is, for white men. The wages of natives had risen from four shillings and a penny to four shillings and eleven pence a day—including the cost of their living. The cost of stones was up. Miners returned from the war demanded to be taken on again. Miners who had their places refused to leave. The dismissal of a miner for almost any reason at all meant a strike.

On top of everything, what with this constant pricking restlessness, and this nervous feeling too that was over all the world, and the fact that the new young miners were not by disposition or training workers, work in general was not as efficient as it had been before the war—the work of the white miners. And for similar reasons, and other reasons too, the efficiency of black workers was down even more. The other reasons were that natives coming to work now in the mines had no stamina because, with the cost of living so high, they were half starved at home; and also because the colour bar resulted in such ludicrous regulations concerning what they might or might not do, and how and when, that a native spending twelve hours a day underground could often do no more than five hours' work. He sat about waiting for the white man to come before he might begin, or he waited for the white man's sort of work to be finished first. What was more, 'a miner could not even give him a sour look' ('a thrashing?' asked Smuts). . . .

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In short, mining costs in general were up by over fifty per cent, and all that kept the mines going was the devaluation in these days of money, for this raised the price of gold as it raised the price of all commodities.

The question, however, was whether the world would not return to the gold standard. In 1921, the price of gold was a hundred and four shillings as against the normal price of eighty-five shillings. At a hundred and four shillings there were thirty-nine mines working. If the world returned to the gold standard and the price of gold to eighty-five shillings, twenty-four of these mines, under the present conditions, would have to close down. The price of gold did, in fact, drop heavily next January.

So now the owners wanted to reduce working expenses.

They proposed, to that end, a revision of the system under which miners, doing development work, could earn anything up to a hundred and fifty pounds a month; an alteration of those trade union restrictions that prevented efficiency underground; and the replacement of two thousand white miners by natives on the cancellation of an existing agreement under which natives might not do certain classes of mine work. This prohibition had no connection with the statutory colour bar; it was a special agreement exacted from the mine owners in 1917 under threat of a strike, and known as the Status Quo Agreement.

Two or three months later men, unable often to read or write their own language, went in their thousands about the streets of Johannesburg shouting the words Status Quo. Few of their leaders knew the difference between the statutory colour bar and this Status Quo. Few of the Members of Parliament (as Smuts came to point out) knew it.

Smuts, ill enough to admit at last that he had 'enteric, gastric influenza or what not', was put on spare diet and ordered a month's rest.



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He had no time to take the month's rest. He presided at conferences and enquiries; received deputations; made speeches; wrote letters; offered solutions; explained, pleaded, urged and threatened; failed.

However, the actual business of striking began, not in the gold mines, but in the coal mines.

On January 1st the coal miners on several Transvaal mines ceased work owing to a reduction of their wages from thirty to twenty-five shillings a day, the mine owners refused to arbitrate, and three weeks later dismissed them.

Smuts had said about the complaints of the natives: 'As a government and a community and a nation we have, in sheer honour and sheer human decency, to see what can be done to meet the charges of our black fellow workers.' He had little sympathy with the demands of the white miners.

Concerning the coal miners he said: 'I should like to know how many farmers in this South Africa of ours earn twenty-five shillings a day from one year to another. . . . The coal miners are a good body of men, but they have made a mistake for which not only they themselves but the whole country is going to pay. . . . Those men think they are on strike. They are not on strike. They are unemployed. They have destroyed their industry.'

He begged the gold miners not to follow the coal miners without further negotiation. The gold industry, he told them, was in a perilous condition; their coming out would finally ruin a number of mines; the two hundred thousand natives on the mines could not be kept unemployed and uncontrolled—a futile expense and a potential danger—and would have to be repatriated; the richest mines would be delayed in starting again, and the poorest would never start again.

A strike, he warned them, was an appeal to public opinion. 'The party that is supported by public opinion is going

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to win. . . . If these mines close down to-morrow because you refuse my simple, reasonable request, the public will look upon it as an outrage. . . . You are taking an onus on you that is dreadful. Do not take that onus.'

They took the onus. In former strikes the men on one or two or half a dozen gold mines had come out. Now at last that happened which the people of Johannesburg had dreaded for a decade. All the men on all the mines came out.

With a foundation of twenty-two thousand gold miners, with the affiliated trade unions and railwaymen, with the unemployed and unemployable in the slums of Johannesburg, those whose ultimate object was a revolution—a new social system under their own control—could do what they desired.

The strikers expected also the assistance of the Nationalists.

### 4

According to the findings of the Judicial Commission that enquired into the Rand Revolution, the causes of 'the Revolutionary movement in which the strike terminated' were, among others, these:

The belief that help would come from the Orange Free State and country districts of the Transvaal.

The attempt of National Party leaders to make capital out of the industrial strike to embarrass the Government.

The idea of Nationalist strikers that, through the strike, they could regain their old republic.

The men organising the revolution—the Council of Action they called themselves—in fact warned the Nationalists that, if they wished to avoid disappointment in the next election, they had better keep their promise to feed the strikers. . . .

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In the leading Nationalist paper a cartoon showed Smuts as the handyman, not of the Empire, as was said by the English during the war, but of Hoggenheimer—the Mines.

Hoggenheimer (to his Handyman): How goes it, Jannie? Are you pleased with my attitude towards the workers?

Smuts: Oh, yes. Keep on. If necessity arises, you can count on me as in 1913.

The allusion was to the bloodshed of 1913.

‘Does not’, an inspired letter asked in another Nationalist paper, ‘does not Jan Smuts oppose his own flesh and blood to fatten robbers and women-murderers while his own folk perish of poverty and suffering?’

‘Women-murderers’ referred presumably to the concentration camps in the Boer War.

It became the general habit now among labour leaders to call Smuts an ‘agent and executive officer of the Chamber of Mines’. Threats to shoot him were made both anonymously and publicly. Disaffected men haunted his farm, and he evaded them by sleeping on the veld.

The Nationalist who most strongly backed the workers was Tielman Roos, the leader of the Transvaal group. He issued a circular accusing Smuts of conspiring against the workers with the Chamber of Mines. He suggested in a public speech that a government, sympathetic to the people rather than the mine owners, might work the mines on a non-profit system; his audience sang, in due appreciation of his meaning, the Transvaal republican anthem; and various mass meetings passed republican resolutions.

Smuts continued his attempts at conciliation. ‘I appeal to the Federation’, he wrote towards the middle of February, ‘to call off the strike on the basis of the Status Quo remaining temporarily on high grade mines and leave the final settlement to Parliament. Schemes are being worked out for employing some thousands on afforestation, irrigation

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and other public work. The Government will use all its powers to protect those who listen to this appeal, and the police have instructions as from next Monday to give protection to all miners who return to their employment, and I call upon the mine owners to restart the mines in all cases where sufficient numbers of men offer to return to their work.'

The mine owners agreed to restart the mines.

The augmented Executive of the Industrial Federation answered: 'We accept General Smuts' challenge to the workers, and we recommend all men on strike to stand fast.' A Labour Member of Parliament called Smuts' letter 'an appeal for scabs', patrols were organised, mines picketed, and men who returned (a number did return) 'pulled out' by commandoes, not only of strikers, but of hooligans and women.

Now the plans that had been maturing darkly since 1914 were ready. One spoke less often of a Strike Committee than of a Council of Action. Strikers became rebels, Reds, revolutionaries. They carried rifles and revolvers. They had one or two machine guns. Every township along the sixty miles of reef of which Johannesburg was the centre had its commandoes and commandants. Cyclist, ambulance and signalling corps were formed. There were drills and parades and bombing exercises. Men were trained to pull riders from horses. There was an intelligence system. There was a General Staff. It was said, as had been said in Ireland in 1915 and as came to be said in Germany in 1933, that all this activity was only sport and exercise to keep the people healthily occupied.

The commandoes were composed chiefly of Nationalists, and all the commandants were Nationalists. But there was a commando of returned soldiers, an Irish commando and commandoes of women. The organisers were English.

5

Because of the trouble in the Transvaal, Parliament, that should have met in Cape Town on January 20th, did not meet till February 17th.

The next day Smuts said:

'If the workers will recognise what I know is the fact, and every member knows is the fact, that an immediate settlement cannot be expected from the House, the strikers will return to work.'

A Labour Member: On what terms?

Smuts: On the Chamber's terms.

He added three words as ominous as the words in which he had described the situation of the coal miners when he said: 'Those men think they are on strike. They are not on strike. They are unemployed.'

'On any terms,' he said.

6

During the next few days, while Nationalists and Labour Members united in denouncing him, he sat back in his seat, staring at the ceiling or reading. Then, on a rising note, he spoke:

He said that no strike had been necessary at all. 'The gold miners were not faced with any impasse from which they could only extricate themselves by means of a strike. They had a clear month before the changes came into force. Parliament was due to meet. . . . We should have had an opportunity to intervene and assist.'

He recapitulated his arguments to the miners. 'I told them: "Remember, gentlemen, if you don't take my advice, the Government is going to be impartial. If you rush into the strike a month before it is necessary, you will find the attitude of the Government will be one of severe im-

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partiality. . . . We shall draw a ring round you disputants and allow you to fight it out. All we shall do is to preserve law and order." I implored them to consider a few more days before taking the fatal step. I was looked upon as an agent of the Chamber of Mines. My words as Prime Minister remained unheeded. A strike was declared prematurely and precipitately. . . .'

He described how men were withdrawn from essential services. In England, he said, public opinion had compelled striking coal miners to return to their pumps. 'There was no such consideration for the industry here. It is one of the most terrible facts that thousands of miners look upon their industry, not as a main interest in their lives, but as their enemy. . . . It seems as if they were anxious to destroy the industry that keeps them going. . . .'

He discussed 'the improper and ill-advised' intervention of the National Party leaders. 'I do not mind at all that I am called the paid agent of the Chamber of Mines. It does not affect me. I am entirely beyond it. I do my duty, whatever I am called. . . .

'But when the workers of the country are told by the Nationalist leaders that this is a Government of scoundrels, that it is a Government of paid agents under the Chamber of Mines, when the characters—not only the public but the private characters—of Members of the Government, and especially the Prime Minister, are blackened to the utmost, then it becomes impossible for the workers to have any faith in their Government, and it becomes impossible for us to effect anything. Even when we make the utmost efforts to rescue them from the impossible position into which they have got themselves they look upon us as the paid agents, the hirelings of the Chamber of Mines.'

Impartial observers were impressed by Smuts' dignity under abuse; they thought there was something fine in the

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way he made his speech. But what South Africans chiefly noticed about the speech were these words:

‘We shall draw a ring round you disputants and allow you to fight it out.’

### 7

Miners are not people who save their money. The South African mines are the best run in the world, they are much better run than the English mines. Nevertheless, there is a something inhuman, a crushing something, about working a mile underground that cannot but crack a man. And then the phthisis that miners used to get in those days. . . . What with this and that, few miners in 1922 could withstand the siege of a strike.

Towards the end of February there were a number creeping back to the mines; and there were old miners and phthisis men (quick and shallow of breath, hollow behind the ears) coming to the houses of the bourgeois for casual work and whispering their suicidal longing for the good old times when no unions existed.

They looked at one another then, bourgeois and workers, with sadness, without rancour, equally lost before that destiny which makes man, so small, so predestined to suffering, so helpless in his loves and in his longings, godlike only in this—the power of his hate.

### 8

Down the streets of the Reef towns and down the streets of Johannesburg men and women paraded carrying banners ‘A White South Africa For Your Children’, and behind them and at their sides ran little ragged laughing natives. On a square opposite the Johannesburg Drill Hall men and women, standing on wagons, shouted to great

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gatherings about the Old Flag or the Red Flag, and the response to this was: 'You can't live on fried flag.'

Every now and then, in some sort of fear, men would begin to run this way or that, and hundreds would begin to run after them, and those who did not run would turn to see what all the excitement was about, and it would be about nothing at all, and from the speakers on the wagons would float words one barely heard: 'Homes and children', 'Status Quo', 'White South Africa', and on the edges of the crowd would be lounging the people against whom all the shouting was directed—the inevitable cheerful natives.

There was an expression everyone now used: 'One day the balloon will go up.'



## Chapter XXXIX

### THE RAND REVOLUTION

#### I

**B**efore the trouble began in January there were under two thousand five hundred police on the Reef. Those were increased by mounted riflemen and special constables to something over four thousand, and three thousand citizens of Johannesburg enrolled themselves as civic guards.

Until the beginning of February the police had carried only batons. But when mines were picketed by armed guards and scabs were pulled out and mauled and derided by women and even their wives and children were terrorised; when there were dynamite outrages; when unresisting natives, warned by Smuts to be quiet, were brutally attacked, and there was public incitement to violence and police stations were threatened, then the police began to be armed, and towards the end of February all policemen on night duty carried rifles and civic guards also were given rifles.

Throughout the month there had been clashes between scabs and strikers and police and strikers, and on February 27th there was trouble that resulted in a number of strikers being arrested and lodged in gaol. Outside the gaol their comrades demonstrated and sang 'The Red Flag'. They were told to disperse and did not. The police fired and three men were killed and several wounded and some of the police were wounded.

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Labour leaders in the House and outside spoke terrible words. A procession two miles long followed the coffins of the dead strikers. A great banner preceded it that said: 'Remember 1913'. The Industrial Federation banner said: 'Remember our Comrades Murdered in 1913.' The banner of the women's commandoes said: 'Our Comrades Murdered in Cold Blood By The Police.'

One came to hear about lists of people to be executed when the revolutionaries assumed power, of a red robe of justice and a black cap of death.

The citizens of Johannesburg demanded Government protection and a proclamation of Martial Law, and so did the natives.

On March 1st Smuts spoke in the House words for which he came to be criticised not only by opponents but also by supporters. 'I think', he said, 'we shall allow things to develop.'

They joined these words to those others: 'We shall draw a ring fence round you disputants and allow you to fight it out.'

Was the Government going to do *nothing*? Smuts emphasised, after everything was over, that it had been the Government's deliberate policy 'to let the country see . . . to let the situation develop.'

There were people who remembered how in Ireland, in 1914 and 1915, men had practised warlike manoeuvres under the eyes of the police and how that situation had developed. . . .

It was a classic letter by the Chamber of Mines, a letter of classic ugliness—it was the Chamber's reply to the Federation's request for a round table conference—that inevitably cut the rope of the balloon.

The letter said that the Chamber would not 'waste further time in endeavouring to convince persons of your

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mental calibre. The Chamber has made an attempt to re-start the mines on its own account. That attempt is succeeding to a very considerable and rapidly increasing extent. The Federation, in the obvious desire to obstruct that attempt, proposes to substitute for it an opportunity for their orators to expend a few million more words. . . . The members of the Chamber are occupied with the winning of gold and coal and they see no reason why they should discuss their business with representatives of slaughtermen and tramwaymen.'

The balloon went up.

A general strike was declared in all trades affiliated to the South African Industrial Federation. A general strike—in fact, the war phase of a revolution. Light and power were stopped, trains and trams and the transport of food.

The revolutionaries said:

'We are definite and our decisions are final to face death at any moment to achieve our object. We have sworn together. With the guaranteed support of the whole of the forces of the backveld, the Northern Transvaal and other centres, we shall not go under.'

'The strikers', one of them later confessed, 'sent their men out on to the veld to meet the armed burghers at the points agreed upon, but the burghers were not at the appointed places.'

A few days later Smuts, for his part, called upon the burghers, and they came.

### 2

Johannesburg has one of the biggest municipal areas in the British Empire; but when gold began to boom in 1932 it suddenly developed skywards on about a square mile of narrow streets as if it had no more space than New York, and now it is unrecognisably different not only from the

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Johannesburg of 1922, but even from the Johannesburg of 1932.

However, the old railway station of wood and iron stood where the new one stands, and also the law courts are unchanged. Slums crouched, as they do to-day, against the city. Past these slums, past diminishing shops, past bits of Port Said and bits of Haarlem, past rusting iron sheds swarming with people of all colours and races, past foulnesses of every description the great streets ran as now towards a township called Fordsburg. The northern outlet of the city was a long road called Jan Smuts Avenue, and off Jan Smuts Avenue, two miles from the city, between the ridge holding the Rand University and various schools and a ridge topped with houses, lay a valley. East and west, through Johannesburg city, ran sixty miles of gold mines and reef towns. Their dumps, white and cloud grey, could be seen from the city, and on still nights could be heard the throbbing of battery stamps.

As soon as the general strike was declared the revolutionaries seized every Reef town and they controlled the whole of Johannesburg city except the station, the law courts and a few central streets. Their headquarters was the township called Fordsburg. One of their principal strongholds was a school on the ridge off Jan Smuts Avenue, and in the valley below lay the police.

There was no reason why the revolutionaries should not have completely taken Johannesburg, and so held the gold mines and the whole country to ransom. There was nothing to stop them. They attacked women and children, murdered running frightened people and isolated mine officials. A Johannesburg paper wrote of 'the foul spectacle of shrieking, hysterical, debased hooligans bludgeoning in-offensive natives as though engaged in a rat hunt.' But the big thing they did not do.

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It was not until March 10th that Martial Law was proclaimed in Johannesburg.

'For days', said Smuts, in announcing Martial Law to Parliament, 'Martial Law has existed on the Rand. But it has not been the Martial Law of the Government. It has been the Martial Law of the Commandoes. . . .

'The Government was very reluctant to declare Martial Law, knowing the temper of the people and that in the end there would be serious bloodshed. We struggled to deal with the situation as best we could under the ordinary powers we have by law.

'However . . . the choice has been taken away from the Government. This morning, from practically one side of the Reef to the other, the commandoes attacked, and fighting has been going on over a large part of the Rand, and is still going on, and there have been heavy casualties. . . .

'The railways are practically in abeyance; the railwaymen are pulled out from their duties; their private houses are being visited and their wives and children tampered with and ill-treated. All essential services have been brought to a standstill and the natives are from one end of the Reef to another in a state of wild turmoil.

'When the strike took place we issued a proclamation to the natives and told them to be quiet and keep to their compounds, and if they behaved well and peacefully the Government would give them protection. They have been murdered in large numbers, and they have appealed to me to make good my promise and I have to do so. . . .

'Martial Law has been proclaimed on the Rand and adjoining districts. The Defence Force units in that area have been mobilised, and the burghers have been called to come up.'

He did not say that he himself was leaving at once to direct these forces in Johannesburg.

## THE RAND REVOLUTION

### 3

However, there were two leakages. The Reds knew that Smuts was coming to Johannesburg, and they arranged to wreck his train as he approached Johannesburg. Smuts knew the Reds' arrangement about wrecking his train, and he came the last eighty miles by car.

He had to drive through bullets, and as he entered Johannesburg a tyre of his car was hit.

He arrived after midnight two days after the proclamation of Martial Law. He found everything in a state of distraction. But now, by dawn, guns were near Jan Smuts Avenue; the revolutionaries were driven from their ridge overlooking the valley; people living on the opposite ridge sat watching the battle, found bullets in their gardens, and could hear policemen say to their captured: 'Well, who's boss now?'; within the day they were driven from a number of the Reef towns they held.

Two days later papers in English, Dutch, Sesuto and Zulu were dropped from aeroplanes flying over Fordsburg advising 'all persons well-affected towards the Government' to leave Fordsburg between six and eleven that morning, and proceed, with what they could carry, along a given route to a given destination. And, during the five hours, people with wagons and carts and trolleys, people with bundles and children and dogs and cats, white people and black people, disaffected people passing for well-affected, trekked in a long procession from Fordsburg.

The clock on Johannesburg post office chimed the hour and struck eleven, and guns fired, and buildings crashed, and two Red leaders in one of the buildings took their lives as they had vowed to do.

At midday the Reds hoisted the white flag over Fordsburg.

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In the House a hushed Tielman Roos asked for an assurance that no revolutionaries would be sentenced to death, but unconditional surrender was demanded.

Two hundred and ninety-one policemen and Government troops were killed and wounded, a hundred and fifty-seven revolutionaries, eighty-seven non-combatants and a hundred and fifty-two natives.

During the fighting the dead had been buried temporarily in a park because the cemeteries of Johannesburg were under fire—soldiers, Reds and citizens all together.

But four Reds were shot, of whom three were brothers called Hanekom, because of an order to fire on snipers caught red-handed. According to the Judicial Commission they belonged to a family of singularly bad reputation. Smuts, however, came to have almost as much trouble over the Hanekom brothers as over Jopie Fourie. . . .

### 4

To the burghers who had come to his assistance Smuts, full of emotion, said:

‘We made the call. We did not give you much time, but, loyal burghers, we knew we could rely on you. . . .

‘I slept like a general in the middle of his army, with the consciousness that if danger threatened thousands and tens of thousands would stand by him and would not stay to ask the reason why. You had nothing but horses and saddles and bridles, but your one thought was to do your duty. . . . The revolutionaries are broken, and, believe me, they have learnt a lesson.

‘Ugly things, horrible things have happened, atrocities and other things I would never have expected, even from barbarians. People have been murdered in cold blood, people who have put up their hands have been mutilated even after being murdered. We cannot allow that sort of

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thing in South Africa. . . . We are building a nation and you can never build a nation by lawlessness. . . .

'It is a great thing for the Government to know that they need keep no standing armies. You can go and sow your mealies, look after your sheep, carry on your farming, and when you are wanted, without pay or reward you will do your duty towards your country.

'What I can do for you as the representative of the Government I will do, and I shall continue with all my might to serve my people. My people are worth it.'

He appealed then to the employers to 'err on the side of leniency in re-employing men', and to the public to 'come to the succour' of the unemployed and their families.

His next work was to ask Parliament to indemnify Government for declaring Martial Law. But he understood that he was facing more than an Indemnity Bill. He was fighting for his political life. And so he had known it would be when he went to Johannesburg himself to take military measures against the revolutionaries: 'My eyes were open', he says. 'But it was no time to think about my political career. There are moments when you have to risk yourself. The whole country was at stake. . . .'

He explained to Parliament how 'the workers quietly dropped out, and in their place there walked on to the stage this sinister force which had kept in abeyance so long', directed by 'a revolutionary military junta of five, known as the Council of Action'; . . . how 'ignorant people . . . read in the Press day after day the most vile invective against the Government . . . that the Government was a pack of scoundrels, traitors and people unfit to govern the lowest forms of society.'

The plan of campaign, he went on, was 'that the natives would be goaded into revolt, and attacks would be made all over the Rand against the natives. When they were set



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going the story would be spread all over the country that there was a general native outbreak, and the commandoes would join in. . . . This general native debacle was in order that a motive might be found for the revolution. . . . This is supported by what actually took place. . . .

‘I told my colleagues—and my colleagues will bear me out—that the possibility might arise in a couple of days, if we delayed the declaration of Martial Law and the calling up of the burghers and lost control of the Rand, that matters might get out of hand there. . . . But even with that risk before us the Government said: “We’ll run it. If there are revolutionary forces abroad in the country, if we are forever working on the edge of a volcano in South Africa, let the country see it. Let us, even at the risk of a couple of days’ revolution in Johannesburg, delay the declaration of Martial Law and let the situation develop.” . . . Well, the situation did develop. For a couple of days we did lose control, and during those days we saw a state of affairs on the Rand which I hope will prove an object lesson to the people of this country for ever.’

Now the Government, he said, asked an indemnity ‘for its officials and servants who took part in the suppression of the disturbances and acted in good faith. It is the usual formula for such acts. . . .’

General Hertzog opposed the motion. He said that Smuts himself was responsible for the bloodshed.

### 5

He described from his own angle the course of the revolution. ‘The Premier’, he said, ‘sat still and incited the men. He shot them down with one object—that he might sit behind the tortoise to stick his fork into its head when it should put that head out. . . . Did the Prime Minister in his

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statement display any sense of justice? Did he, by "allowing the situation to develop", display any care for the future, any anxiety lest innocent people should be killed? He was totally unconcerned about innocent people being killed.'

General Hertzog proceeded to show how often Smuts was to be found on a trail of blood. He did not mention the Boer War, but he mentioned the bloodless deportations of 1914 and the Great War. The instances he accumulated were the Indian Passive Resistance Movement, the 1913 strike, the 1914 deportations, the Boer Rebellion, the Great War, the Native strike in Port Elizabeth, Bullhoek and now the Rand Revolution.

'The Prime Minister's footsteps', he said, 'drip with blood. His footsteps will go down to history in that manner.'

The Speaker several times called General Hertzog to order, and Colonel Deneys Reitz rose to blame the Nationalists themselves for both the 1914 and the Rand Rebellions, and passionately to defend Smuts. Smuts himself said nothing until three days later, at a South African Party congress, the delegates stood and cheered him until he was compelled to speak. He said then that such an attack as had been made on him—accusations of 'callousness, heartlessness, criminality and pleasure in the shedding of innocent blood' had never before been heard in South Africa. . . .

And yet what should happen only two months later but blood again!

There was a Hottentot rebellion in South-West Africa that the Union, mandatory now of South-West Africa, had inherited from the Germans. Fighting actually came over some business of an unjustifiable dog-tax. At root, however, lay a conception that had at last reached the Hottentots from the Paris Peace Conference. The Bondelswart

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Hottentots wanted National Recognition. 'They have asked', Smuts explained, 'to be allowed to send a representative to the Court at St. James, but we have not been able to recognise their claim to that extent.'

Bombing aeroplanes were sent to South-West Africa. There were fifty-three casualties among the Hottentots, and the rumour was that, of these fifty-three casualties, fifty-two were deaths.

Colonel Creswell, the leader of the Labour Party, asked the House what inference one might draw from such figures.

Smuts replied.

'In the late war', he said, 'we sent a hundred and thirty-six thousand men from South Africa, and, wherever they went, on the African continent, in Asia or in Europe, they earned a reputation for their chivalrous conduct. It has been left to an officer of our forces to put a blot on our escutcheon. And without any evidence to support this charge he comes forward. . . .

'The debate has taken a personal turn. At first it was all about the Bondelswarts and the Administration, but tonight the whole fire seems to have been concentrated on me. It leaves me cold.'

A Labour Member: Murder always does.

Smuts: Not because I am callous. But because I know perfectly well that I am guiltless of any moral or political blame in the matter. . . . How on earth can the Prime Minister be blamed for what happened there any more than for a flight of locusts across the Orange River? I know nothing about it. . . .

Then take Bullhoek. I am posted in Moscow as the Butcher of Bullhoek. That is my reputation in Russia.

A Labour Member: Yes, and not only in Russia.

Smuts: Surely, on an occasion like this, all party feeling,

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all party bitterness, should be set aside. For a party to hold up the Prime Minister to millions of natives as a criminal, as a man not to be trusted, as a man of blood, as a man of the rifle, is a dangerous thing. . . .

We are discussing the affairs of South-West Africa, and what has been said during this debate will be quoted at Geneva and at other places all over the world, quoted by people who are jealous of the position we occupy on the African continent. . . .

Said Colonel Creswell: 'A smoke screen.'

### 6

The end of the 1922 Revolution was that, in a few days, Johannesburg resumed its normal life, but that never again were there great strikes, and the power station no longer controlled the town, and the gold mines lived to flourish once more and to bear the burden of all South Africa.

And captured 'commandants' had their photographs published in a friendly group with the Defence Force officers in charge of their camp, and when, in due course, the Nationalists came to govern the country, Red 'generals' entered Parliament and a man convicted of treason was given a Defence Force appointment. For what the Minister said was that he proposed 'to treat the Rand Revolt just in the same way as those other affairs were treated in the past, just as Sir Starr Jameson had been looked upon after the Raid as a person fitted for a high post.' And Smuts read to Parliament the letter of eleven men, reprieved from death, wishing the Governor-General 'the compliments of the season, together with their grateful appreciation for having lifted the awful incubus of death from their shoulders. . . . For whatever errors we have committed, you have made

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repentance possible for us, and have left us the hope of one day proving by good actions our worthiness.'

And to the great world the whole business was no more than the plucking of a hair. A little wrench and something gone, yet soon no pain and fresh growth.

But it broke Smuts.

## Chapter XL

### RHODESIA REJECTS THE UNION

#### I

For a moment he had the hope that it might not. Most opportunely in his need—yet most inopportunely because his need was so obvious—at this crisis in his affairs and the affairs of South Africa, the Chartered Company's control of Rhodesia ended and the Rhodesians became free to arrange their own future.

The only time Rhodes saw Smuts was when, in his boyhood at Stellenbosch, Smuts had impressed him by speaking of South Africa expanding in the Elizabethan way. Smuts had ever since carried in his heart Rhodes' own dream. After the taking of German South-West Africa, he had said, as so often before: 'If we continue on the road of union our northern boundaries will not be where they now are, and we shall leave our children a huge country in which to develop a type for themselves, and to form a people who will be a true civilising agency in this dark continent.'

Later he spoke of 'a great African Federation of States'. And 'the day will surely come', he said, 'when we shall not think of the south of the Limpopo only, but when the British States in Africa will all become members of a great African Dominion stretching unbroken throughout Africa.' And 'the term South Africa', he said, 'will surely one day be dropped from our national vocabulary, and there

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will be a united British Africa which will find the solution of our pressing problems an easy matter.'

He said these things without particular reference to Rhodesia. And it did seem—when the Great War gave the Union control over German South-West Africa and England control over German East Africa—it did seem that some day there might be a United States of Africa within the British Commonwealth. . . .

In 1921, when his own people were turning from Smuts because of his adherence to England, an English party had come to his support. . . .

What if now, in these worse days, another English party should come to his support—the support not only of his cause in the Union, but of those aspirations he shared with Rhodes?

What an opportunity for Fate! What a most dramatic possibility!

He went to Rhodesia and told the people (laughing, because his desire was so poignant, while they, seeing the surface only, laughed too): 'This is not a political tour at all. This tour has nothing to do with politics.' And he reminded them then of what they knew well enough: that the union of all South Africa was Rhodes' dream. And he said: 'The people of the Union will not look upon you in any way but as blood-brothers. We shall help and support you as brothers.' And he offered them an amount of help and support that the Nationalists called 'wholesale bribery', and 'the great betrayal', and Tielman Roos symbolised as follows: 'He has gone a-wooing. Miss Rhodesia is being wooed by General Smuts. And how does he do it? . . . He offers to buy her. . . .'

The Rhodesians considered the advantages and disadvantages of entering the Union. As to the disadvantages, they saw themselves as a small British community lost in

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a population mainly Dutch; forced to learn a new language, to yield their identity, their status and their intimate connection with England. The recent history of the Union was one of strikes and rebellion, class bitterness and a declared hostility to everything British.

The advantages were help in the present, a dream for the future and the personality of Smuts. That feeling for or against Smuts, which has compelled South African history for thirty years, seriously counted. There are Rhodesians who still speak of the effect Smuts had on them in those days in 1922.

It fell to under fifteen thousand people to decide a question on which hung the future not only of Rhodesia and the Union, but even, largely, of Africa. The majority against entering the Union was two thousand seven hundred and eighty-five.

There are people in South Africa who say that if, after the Boer War, Milner's plan had been extended of settling in the country (wives sent out in batches) some of the hundreds of thousands of British soldiers already there through the war, South Africa would presently have had a preponderantly British population, and a United States of Africa would then have resulted. They think England might later, to the same end, have capitalised her dole money, and sent out her unemployed. . . .

The present position is that Rhodesia looks north rather than south for comradeship, yet needs the south.

### 2

In the Union they began to prophesy the downfall of Smuts. On a basis of common hatred of Smuts (the friend of Hoggensheimer, the friend of England) Labour and Nationalists drew together. They agreed 'that the present Government acts as though dominated by the conviction that



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the interest of this country is best served by its taking what may be termed the "big finance" view of our various internal and economic problems, and that its policy is not only injuring the present welfare of the country, but is seriously jeopardising our destiny as a civilised people.' They also agreed that 'no Nationalist Member of Parliament will use his vote to upset the existing constitutional relation of South Africa to the British Commonwealth.'

It is one of South Africa's complaints against Smuts that he feels nothing. He was, however, in these days, physically ill and deeply dejected. 'I am down,' he wrote to a friend, 'body and spirit.' That was his condition throughout 1923 and 1924.

It was with relief he left for England in September of 1923 to attend the Imperial Conference and make his historic statement concerning the Ruhr.

The English said there was no statesman in England or the Empire to compare with Smuts, and they asked him again to stay in England.

He preferred to return to the hatred of South Africa.

## Chapter XLI

### THE DOWNFALL OF SMUTS

#### I

Smuts had resumed Government, after the elections of 1921, with a majority over all parties of twenty-four. That year saw the worst drought in South Africa in fifty years—the culminating drought of a procession of droughts, and, on top of the drought, a plague of locusts beyond precedent.

The farmers were in despair.

Then there was the depression South Africa shared with all the world—the aftermath of the war: the collapse of prices, the collapse of industry, taxation, retrenchment, unemployment.

So business men and workers were in despair.

When Smuts came home from the Imperial Conference of that year and his work in Ireland he was met, even on landing, by crowds of shouting, angry men.

By the time of the Rand Revolt his majority was down to fourteen. He began the 1924 session with a majority that was nominally nine, but Merriman (last Premier of the Cape Colony) was away ill; other men in the party were also old and often absent; there were Bills that barely evaded defeat.

Now, when Smuts came to speak at meetings, he was sometimes refused a hearing or the meetings ended in fighting. At Bloemfontein the doors of the Town Hall

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were smashed in and chairs broken to pieces. In Natal and in the Cape Province he was howled down by organised bands. Worst of all was the feeling against him in the Transvaal: on the Reef naturally, because of the miners; but even in his own constituency in Pretoria because the railway workers voted there.

His majority sank to eight. And, finally, at a by-election in the Transvaal the strongest candidate the South African Party could produce was defeated by an unknown Nationalist, and then Smuts resigned. A year and a half before a new election was due, with the Prince of Wales about to come, he suddenly told the country and the House, and thus, for the first time, the rank and file of his shocked party, that he did not propose to continue unless he knew the will of the country.

The visit of the Prince of Wales was postponed.

An election took place in the middle of June.

Labour supported Nationalist and Nationalist supported Labour.

Smuts still speaks of the combination with vehemence. That they were working together against him he knew, but that they had a secret pact and were formally united he only now discovered.

'I was properly sold,' he says. 'Who could have dreamt of such a thing? If the Labour Party had joined the South African Party, that would not have been unnatural. We were a Liberal Party, largely composed of Englishmen, and we stood for association with the British Empire. But when I asked the Labour people to come in they said their Party Constitution prohibited them from accepting office in a Government where they hadn't a majority. They said it publicly.

'The Nationalist Party was a party of land-owners, and it was violently opposed to England.

## THE DOWNFALL OF SMUTS

'Yet the Labourites joined them. They were blind and mad over the revolution. They cared for nothing except to break me. Nothing mattered—no principle—nothing—as long as they could break me.

'Well, they broke me, but they broke themselves. Yes, they altogether finished themselves.'

They say the South African Party ran the election campaign badly, and that Smuts was without fire: 'A cracked gramophone record', they called him.

He lost the election overwhelmingly. He was routed in the Transvaal. He himself was defeated by a most surprised Labour candidate.

Three other Ministers were defeated.

The Nationalists won sixty-three seats, the South African Party (included in it the old Unionists) fifty-three, and Labour eighteen. There was one Independent.

The Nationalists duly formed their Pact Government with the Labourites, and gave them two (and afterwards three) seats in the Cabinet. When the original Labour Party sank to five, three of them were still in the Cabinet.

Among the Nationalist Members there was not a single Briton. Among the Labourites not a single Boer. Their principles were hostile. Their association was based on two hatreds: hatred of the black man and hatred of Smuts.

So now on each side of the House there sat a combination of Briton and Boer, and twelve years from his weak beginnings General Hertzog led the Government.

The rains came, the Prince of Wales came, maize flourished, mines improved, prosperity slowly returned. In these years, when Smuts spoke of the advantages of having the South African Party in Government, it might genuinely amuse the National Party to see a cartoon showing Smuts, as a tramp with a concealed dagger, accosting a girl, South Africa, holding a million and three quarters

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surplus in one hand and old age pensions and independence in the other, and saying to her: 'I see you are in great trouble and I have come to help you.'

There were many among Smuts' following who pointed out that the rains and the Prince of Wales should have been allowed to work for the benefit of his own Party.

Smuts says: 'The misfortune was that I could no longer depend on my party. There were old men in it, and also disloyal men. Every Bill was a danger. A defeat in the House would have been an awful humiliation. I preferred to take my chance in the country.'

'Well, if my Party was sick of me, so was the country. That is the truth. I had been in Government, first in the Transvaal and then in the Union, for eighteen years. Too long. All the other wartime leaders were gone. One comes to that. People want a change. I had to go too.'

### 2

He left Groote Schuur without deep regret. Groote Schuur is the house, the estate, that Rhodes, dying while Boers and Britons were still at war, bequeathed for the official home of the Prime Ministers of a United South Africa. It has, since Union, been lived in only by Dutchmen—three of them, and for the shortest period—five years—by Smuts. Sometimes Mrs. Smuts and the family had shared it with him, but it was awkward to move a large family a thousand miles twice a year, and there were children at school in Pretoria. So often Smuts was at Groote Schuur alone.

His family too gave up Groote Schuur without regret. It is in all the Smutses that if they can have freedom they don't need beauty, and the simplicity some people affect is Mrs. Smuts' deepest passion. She virtuously attends Party

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meetings and makes public speeches, but how happy she would be, she says, if Smuts were just a farmer. Smuts and his family are nowhere so content as in the casual farmhouse at Irene where each does, and can do, as he separately chooses.

There were other rearrangements. Since 1910 Smuts had had the income of a Cabinet or Prime Minister; and even in the Transvaal. Now, suddenly, at a time of increased family needs, he was reduced to the income of a private member.

Smuts had to depend on his Parliamentary income. In assets he was a wealthy man, for Smuts, as he likes to remember, understands land, and the farms he had bought during the last fifteen years were all risen in value. At the same time, he was working only one of those farms (he now works three) and even that farm did not pay because first it had to be created, and then he was never there to look after it.

He could not live now on his Parliamentary income.

He would not go in for any other sort of business.

He had given up his law half a generation ago.

He followed a very simple course. Against the security of his assets he drew money from the bank.

He was presently surprised to find how far his expenditure exceeded his income, and how much he owed his bank. Why, last time he had looked at his overdraft it had been only so much! He decided impatiently that the only thing to do about it was to sell his shares. Not his land, certainly not. How can a Boer part with land? But, with pleasure, those declining shares.

A director of the bank thought it a bad time to sell shares; he said the remedy was not selling assets but turning them to more profitable account, and also cutting down expenditure.

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Smuts arranged to follow the good old policy of *Alles sal reg kom*.

Mrs. Smuts economised, trees became salable for mine timber, a good many of his pedigree cows did not die, nobody poisoned his new imported bull (the last one, it was said, had been poisoned) and certainly his land went on appreciating.

Enough troubling about money.

### 3

Men who were in Smuts' Cabinet say he met them for the last time, easy and very offhand, and told them he was glad to be freed of responsibility and to have the chance at last of doing the sort of work he really liked. 'He didn't care. You could see he was pleased.'

His casualness, they say, irritated them.

It probably did, says Smuts.

'But what do you think?' he says. 'Do you think a man would enjoy the idea of sitting there, powerless, with the things he had struggled for all his life going to pieces under his eyes? The sort of work I really liked? Why, I didn't know what to do with myself. . . .

'Not then. Afterwards I decided it was no use succumbing to the temporal. The only safe foundation was the eternal.'

Such words could sound grandiloquent, but Smuts speaks them in the casual way he has about things that matter to him, and, after all, he has proved his right to them.

Smuts is an emotional, haughty, impatient man. But his triumphant opponents could henceforth assault him as they chose. He bore in silence affronts and accusations that many found, on his behalf, intolerable. And there were many too who understood now, if never before, that he was a great man. Other achievements might be more or less than they

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seemed, they might or might not be due to accident or curious circumstance—there could be no doubt about this. . . .

Eight years from the time he lost office, Smuts did protest once. 'Political trickster' was not the worst insult ever offered him; but it caught him somehow unprepared and unprotected, and he objected to it.

Outside Parliament he sometimes said lightly that General Hertzog, 'when he poses as attacking me, always attacks a ghost of his own creation', or there was, he said, 'a sort of pugilistic display' between General Hertzog and himself: 'he with the gloves off and I with my spectacles on'. He even said: 'No, he doesn't hate me. He trusts me. This is only politics. Hertzog is really an idealist. . . .'

But, in 1927, when the Nationalists decided that South Africa had to have its own flag; and the Labourites supported them; and Smuts went about the country protesting that the British Government had done their best to keep every promise made under the Union Jack; and there was the utmost passion for and against; and meetings he held ended in riots: windows smashed, bottles thrown, halls wrecked, police helpless—then he could not abstract himself, and sometimes he did speak bitterly:

'This is politics in our country. This is what we have come to. This is my nation. . . .'

'No. It is the end, and perhaps as well. Perhaps it is as well to see what the new tendencies lead to. Perhaps the people of this country wanted a proof of what the new system will lead to. We see it here to-night in Pretoria. This glorious town is degraded to-night by these Pact people—degraded, degraded! . . . The cup is filled to-night.'

After his defeat in 1924, it was not only his long-drawn struggle in South Africa that bore against him, what he



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called to himself the 'humiliation' of his defeat, it was also the way things in the greater world were going wrong—and especially with the League. He wrote to Sir Austen Chamberlain in 1925 of 'how subtly the League has been fought ever since its origin', and if anything, he thought, could do it further harm it was the Locarno Pact. He saw England involved, separately from her Dominions and separately from America, in the confusions of Europe. 'I look upon the British Empire,' he wrote, 'as, with the United States of America, the main guarantee of any public life that is worth living in the world, and I should be most sorry to weaken the voice of the Empire as a united whole in the councils of the world. . . . I feel that in this grave matter of future world-peace the voice of the Empire would be something greater than the voice merely of Britain.'

Sir Austen Chamberlain asked, in a letter sent on to Smuts, what alternative Smuts proposed. 'He urges in effect that we keep out of Europe. In other words, that we leave Europe to go to destruction in her own way. But if Europe proceeds along this road . . . can we keep out? All our history shows that the answer must be in the negative. . . . Sooner or later we are brought in. . . .'

Smuts protests to this day that, by making these separate arrangements Britain was 'cutting the heart out of the Empire'; 'parting from the Empire'; 'why not go forward to the uncertain future hand in hand with the young nations of the Empire rather than with the spectres of Europe?'

The Locarno Pact seemed to him a fresh danger, not only to the League but also to the British Commonwealth—all the great unions he had worked for in his life seemed to be in danger: the Union of South Africa, the British Commonwealth, the League of Nations.

He sat back in his seat in Parliament—staring at the ceil-

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ing; thinking that, nevertheless, union there must be; thinking that coming together, making whole, was the principle of the universe—that everything *wanted* to be one: ‘matter and spirit, the temporal and the eternal, the finite with the infinite, the particular with the universal. . . .’

What were they buzzing in his ears? He was where they could not touch him—in the sanctuary of his thoughts.

## Chapter XLII

### HOLISM

#### I

**S**mutts' way of resting is to do some other sort of work. At twenty-four, in his Cambridge days, taking the two parts of the Law Tripos in the same year (and heading both), he found his ease in writing a book, never published, which he called *Walt Whitman, A Study in the Evolution of Personality*.

But his purpose was not biography or literary criticism. What moved him to write a book was that he could not find in Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, Hegel, Darwin or the other philosophers he was studying a satisfactory explanation of the universe, and he wanted an explanation of his own. There was in each existing thing, he believed, a characteristic activity of the immanent life which had the power to develop the full promise and potency of that life. This activity corresponded to what in man was called Personality. To demonstrate his theory he had the idea of examining the personality of a particular man. And, for reasons of convenience and immediate interest, he chose for his particular man Walt Whitman.

The conclusion he came to in the book *Walt Whitman* was that the determining force of life, the co-ordinating principle of the universe, was an impulse towards wholeness that manifested itself in each individual by a power of development, growth or evolution from within; and,

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working in its own environment, from itself. He called his theory 'The Idea of the Whole'.

He returned to South Africa to practise as a barrister. The Jameson Raid drove him from the Cape to the Transvaal, where he became, at twenty-nine, State Attorney. In the Boer War he led his guerrilla band, carrying Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in his saddle-bag. He worked for Responsible Government and Union. . . .

And all the time he was thinking of this Idea of the Whole. And, thinking so, 'the existence of wholes and the tendency towards wholes and wholeness in nature' became to him steadily clearer. And, in 1910, in the first year of Union, 'he sought relief from heavy political labours' by writing another study called *An Inquiry Into The Whole*, which was an amplification of his *Walt Whitman* theory.

*An Inquiry Into The Whole* was also not published—not offered for publication, but still he went on brooding over this conception that had been with him, in one form or another, since the age of nineteen. It became, he says, the companion of his life.

Now, in 1924, to shut out humiliation, disillusion, the sense of futility, the taunts and accusations of his victorious opponents, he took up again the work he had done in 1910, to continue with it.

He found its scientific setting out of date, and also his conception in some ways changed.

He decided, accordingly, to set out his philosophy for a third time.

He did it during his first session as Leader of the Opposition.

The law is merciful. It admits extenuating circumstances. It compromises. Art does not and science does not. It is

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moving that Milton was blind and Beethoven deaf, Leibnitz a philosopher at seventeen, and Titian a painter at ninety-eight. It is moving, but to judgment of their work not relevant.

That Smuts, in six months, without a note, without assistance, lonely in his world, among new political difficulties, should have produced this long, often eloquent and even poetic book, analysing the thoughts of half a hundred scientists and philosophers and subjecting the universe in as many aspects to his own conceptions and desires—that a man, so multiple a man, out of a brain charged and recharged over thirty-five years with a particular idea, should have accomplished this feat, is of the most poignant human interest. It is of no consequence to his accomplished work. *Holism* remains only and exactly what it is. With it Smuts enters a new cold world where just a man's naked thought, unprotected by story or circumstance, comes up for judgment.

### 3

The claims Smuts himself makes for Holism are both modest and enormous. He does not claim, in writing or talking about it, to have evolved a new system of philosophy.

The concept of the Whole in relation to its parts follows, he says, Aristotle's doctrine of Forms as the shaping element of matter. He assumes, with Spinoza, that the universe is one substance, of which the physical and mental are related modes of activity. He finds in the monads of Leibnitz the central idea of Holism—varied (since the theory of Evolution and the genetic relationship of monads was a later discovery) by the fact that Leibnitz established Harmony, not from within but, by divine interposition, from without. In Weissmann there is the direction of variation

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and evolution from within, but a direction mechanical, says Smuts, not holistic.

To the extent that what Smuts calls Holism is implicit in many philosophies he is not, he admits, original.

But he says that no real use has been made of this holistic idea. He thinks he has isolated a great thought from its matrix in philosophy and there is significance in the way he has applied this thought. 'For whatever it may be worth, that is my contribution.'

He writes in the book itself that it is 'a little book', merely an introduction to those aspects of Holism in which he is mainly interested, the firstfruits of his fresh effort. And he goes on to say that it is not even 'a treatise on philosophy, but only an exploration of one idea, an attempt to sketch in large and mostly vague tentative outline the meaning and the consequence of one particular idea. . . .'

In the very act, however, of deprecating his book, he declares the relative greatness of the conception it introduces. 'Holism and the holistic point of view,' he believes, 'will prove important in their bearing on some of the main problems of science and philosophy and ethics, art and allied subjects.' And he presents his 'one particular idea' as a germinal idea . . . more than an idea: a fundamental principle operative in the universe.'

### 4

'How do you know', Smuts sometimes asks, 'what Jesus really meant by the Kingdom of Heaven being within you? He may have meant the most profound philosophy. Only who were the people he had to express himself to? A few fishermen. I assume fishermen two thousand years ago were not more intellectually developed than they are now. So there we have—who knows what idea?—seen through

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the simple eyes, reduced to the simple terms, of some fishermen on Galilee.'

It often passes through Smuts' mind that Jesus may have meant what so many—and he himself—have so terribly struggled to understand.

### 5

In proportion as Smuts finds the near world far from him (perhaps because of it) he finds the far world near to him. He is intimate with the people of history and literature as he is not with the people actually in the streets and veld of Africa. Jesus' disciples are men he thinks of as if, not long ago, they farmed in the district of Malmesbury, Cape. They are to him the intimates of his boyhood.

The religion of the Bible is also the intimate of Smuts' boyhood.

At the root of Smuts' Holism lies his impulse towards religion. After he published *Holism* Professor J. S. Haldane wrote to him: 'Plenty of scientific people don't believe in mixing up science with philosophy or religion. It is curious how many people are still naïvely orthodox in their religious beliefs, and seem to keep their science and religion in different parts of their heads.'

Smuts speaks of 'the cool, serious gentle spirit of science', but science is not to Smuts an end in itself: he wants it to give him something to believe in and hope for, a road to some ultimate ideal of being and faith. It is the vision of God, he says, that is the real lure of the human race.

### 6

Holism is a word Smuts has derived from the Greek *holos*—whole—to express three ideas: a definition of the Whole, an agent creating the Whole, a universal principle.

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He begins with an assumption familiar to philosophers. The whole is greater than its parts; the whole influences its parts; the parts influence the whole and one another. 'Forma substantialis totius non superadditur partibus,' says St. Thomas Aquinas, 'sed est totum complectens materiam et formam cum praecisione aliorum. . . .'

Smuts finds in his own theory, however, two great departures from orthodoxy: matter, life and mind do not consist of fixed, constant and unalterable disparate elements. The whole is an active factor in and through all of them.

Evolution he describes as 'a rising series of wholes, from the simplest material patterns to the most advanced . . . with the aspect of unity, inner direction and actual control always increasing. . . .' Everything, he says, *wants* to be whole. 'Electrons and protons, atoms and molecules, inorganic and organic compounds, colloids, protoplasm, plants and animals, minds and personalities are but some steps in this movement of holism.'

Lower wholes, he says, give birth to higher wholes, and become incorporated with them. Mind is a new organ developed inside the earlier physical and biological structures and it unites with them to form a pattern of a new whole. The summit of this new creative and created whole is human personality. And through and in this whole which is human personality the physical rises transcendent from its physiological neural antecedents, the body becomes both human and a body and the mind something more than a functionless abstraction.

And finally everything is of everything: 'Eternity is contained in time, matter is the vesture and vehicle of spirit, reality is not otherworldly but immanent in the phenomenal. . . . Each little centre and whole in the world, however lowly, is a laboratory in which time is transmuted into eternity, the phenomenal into the real. . . . The whole is both the



source and the principle of explanation of all our highest ideals, no less than of the earlier evolutionary structures. . . .’

## 7

Smuts disputes the adequacy of Darwin’s theory of material selection, sexual selection, variation. It is better, he says, ‘to recognise that there is something wider and deeper at work in Evolution than the factors as found by Darwin and his successors, something of which those factors are themselves but an expression. . . .’

‘Everywhere we see the great overplus of the whole. So little is asked; so much more is given.’

Natural selection, he says, is no mere external mechanical factor. The peacock’s feathers are not a response to the peahen’s artistic eyes, but to some emotion in her—the whole drawing upon the whole. The variations in Darwin’s theory of natural selection that Darwin attributes to ‘the direct and indirect action of the conditions of life and to use and disuse’ are caused, says Smuts, by direction from within, by the decision of the whole within. Consider, he says, the gorilla and the human. Evolution is not unrestrained and haphazard. Certain tendencies are developed, others are checked. ‘In an individual organism the whole is in control, pushing forward some tendencies and keeping back others, expressing some variations and repressing others, and through all maintaining a mobile equilibrium of all the elements, positive and negative, that are uniquely blended in the individual. . . .’

‘To me’, he says, ‘the conclusion of the matter is that the inexhaustible whole is itself at work, that Holism is an active factor interacting with the particular Darwinian factors, that not only its aim but also its output far exceed the immediate present utilities and needs of organic evolution, and that its bow is bent for the distant horizons, far beyond all human understanding. . . .’

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Now, further, since change comes from within and only indirectly from without it follows for Smuts that Darwin's idea of the intense struggle and competition of nature becomes partial and inadequate. 'This world', he therefore believes, is 'a friendly universe, in which organised tolerant coexistence is the rule and destructive warfare the exception, resorted to only when the balance of nature is seriously disturbed. Normally, natural selection takes the form of comradeship, of social co-operation and mutual help. Normally also the organic struggle is very much in abeyance, and the silent, effortless, constant pressure of the physical and organic environment exercises a very powerful influence. The young science of ecology has been built up since Darwin's time and is based on the recognition of this fact that, in addition to the operation of natural selection, the environment has a silent, assimilative, transformative influence of a very profound and enduring character in all organic life. In the subtle ways of Nature, man and earth, night and day, and all the things of earth and air and sea mingle silently with life, sink into it and become part of its structure. And in response to this profound stimulus life grows and evolves—the lesser whole in harmony with the greater whole of Nature.

'This is a whole-making universe; it is the fundamental character of this universe to be active in the production of wholes, of ever more complete and advanced wholes. The evolution of the universe, organic and inorganic, is nothing but the record of this whole-making activity in its progressive development.'

## 8

The way the Whole operates is this: Every 'thing', every concept, has its field. The field of force of which electro-

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magnetism is an example is a universal characteristic. 'It is in these fields, and only in these fields, that things really happen. It is the intermingling of fields which is creative or causal in nature as well as in life. The hard, secluded, concrete thing is barren, and but for its field it could never come into real contact or into active or creative relations with any other thing or concept. Things, ideas, animals, plants, persons—all these, like physical forces, have their fields, and but for their fields they would be unintelligible, their activities would be impossible and their relations barren and sterile.' And also the world of matter and life would, he says, be discontinuous and unbridged and therefore unintelligible and inexplicable.

More even than the physical body is the organism, says Smuts, 'an historic event, a focus of happening, a gateway through which the infinite stream of change flows ceaselessly. The sensible organism is only a point, a sort of transit station. . . . The past, the present, the future all meet in that little structural centre, that little wayside station on the infinite trail of life. . . . From that centre radiates off a field of ever-decreasing intensity of structure or force which represents what has endured of that past, of what is vaguely anticipated of the future. The organism and its field are one concentrated structure. . . . In this continuum is contained all of the past which has been conserved and still operates to influence the present and the future of the organism . . . all that the organism is and does . . . its own future development and that of its offspring. . . . The pull of the future is almost as much upon it as the push of the past, and both are essential to the characters, functions and activities which it displays in the present. . . .'

He finds in Einstein's principle that 'the universe is a flowing stream in Space-Time' an explanation of his 'fields'. The physical stuff of the universe, he says, is

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Action and nothing else. Matter is simply the rhythm of Action.

Since Action does not stop at accomplishment, remains Action, remains *in* action, all things 'overflow their own structural limits', and the concept therefore arises 'of things as more than their apparent structures, and of their "fields" as complementary to their full operation and understanding'.

Thus all things are united as centres of the universal Action whose relations constitute Space-Time.

### 9

Smuts has aspects of charming modesty: he knows, for instance, what he doesn't know; he regards with awe a mediocrity who, by an accident of temperament or circumstance, has some apprehension or understanding he has not; he is always beautifully willing to learn, though not exactly to unlearn. And then, again, he knows so much that his knowledge seems to him unimportant. And he has seen and experienced so much that he does not overvalue his privileges and achievements.

There is not only the way that, coming from an African village, he undertook, ten years after learning his letters, to dispute with Plato and Aristotle, Hegel, Bacon and Darwin; the way he is always prepared to do anything anywhere; there is also the way he hates to abandon a belief or admit a mistake.

For it is in Smuts—it is both his strength and his weakness—to find what he seeks. As in politics and life, so in philosophy and science, the thing he wants must—must—be. His cynicism is for the immediate, outward world; never for the eternal, internal world. To this greater world he will not admit Anatole France's amiable idea that the contrary to a truth may also be a truth. Inconsistent though

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South Africans sometimes find Smuts to be, it is profoundly a part of him never to give up what he has taken into his spirit to be his own.

Smuts says that from the time he wrote his first essays on Freedom and Personality, at the age of eighteen or nineteen, from the time, indeed, when *Prometheus Unbound* led him, at the age of sixteen, towards a world beyond the mountains of the Cape, the thought of Holism was in him.

Now, in his book *Holism and Evolution*, he declares again the thoughts of schoolboy essay and early philosophical exercise. Still Freedom is his theme. 'The spontaneous self-activity of the organism in the assimilation of the material necessary for its nourishment and development shows that it is free as an organic whole,' and it implies that freedom 'has its roots deep down in the foundations and constitution of the universe. . . .' 'Holism means not only the development of the universe on holistic lines, the realisation of more perfect wholes, and the assimilation of non-holistic material or relations. It means also the ever-increasing reign of Freedom.'

Still Personality is his theme. Personality is the culmination of this upward movement. It 'illustrates all the functions of wholes'. It is itself 'a whole with an interior control or self-direction of all its component functions; with a power of acquisition from its environment which is not mechanical, but really transforms all acquired material into transparent unity with its own nature, (and) in its unique synthetic process continually performs that greatest of all miracles—the creative transmutation of the lower into the higher in the holistic series.'

As ever he links Freedom with Personality. Because self-direction is so characteristic of the human, 'freedom is not a mere abstract formal concept, but a real activity; it is the limits within which Holism moulds and develops the indi-

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vidual Personality. In proportion as the Personality is holistic, it is rich in the characters of self-direction and self-determination. . . . It is free.' And so 'to be a free Personality represents the highest achievement of which any human being is capable . . . and to realise wholeness or freedom (they are correlative expressions), in the smaller whole of individual life, represents not only the highest of which the individual is capable, but expresses also what is at once highest and deepest in the universal movement of Holism.' And again, as in his early manhood, he demands that there shall be created a new science—the science of Personality (or Personology)—its handmaiden the science of Biography, its object the study of that highest and completest of wholes, that ultimate aspect of evolution Whitman expresses.

*I am an acme of things accomplished*

*And I am an encloser of things to be.*

*My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stars.*

—Human Personality.

Smuts will not have it that human life even in this infinitude of space-time can be exceptional or inconsequent—'a lonely and pathetic thing, "a transient and embarrassed phantom" in an alien universe'. It is at home in a world whose inner essence it expresses. 'In the new universe of experience', he says, in 'the world of spirit, the conscious self or the Personality becomes the new point of universal reference. Without this personal orientation all experience becomes inexplicable and all reality unintelligible.' Personality is the key to the riddle of the universe and all reality.

He ends his book with these words: 'The reflections embodied in this work lie far removed from the busy and exciting scenes in which most of my life has been spent, and yet both of them tend towards the same general conclu-

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sions. . . . Everywhere I have seen men search and struggle for the good with grim determination and earnestness, and with a sincerity of purpose which added to the poignancy of the fratricidal strife. The Great War . . . has shown that we are yet far off the attainment of a Holistic universe . . . but the faith has been borne in upon me that what has been called Holism is at work even in the conflicts and confusions of men. . . . The Holistic Nisus, which rises, like a living fountain, from the very depths of the universe, is the greatest guarantee that failure does not await us, that the ideals of well-being, of truth, beauty and goodness are firmly grounded in the nature of things and will not eventually be endangered or lost.'

So he always says. It is not enough for him that 'a man should rejoice in his own works: for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?' He rejects Ecclesiastes. 'I am a Christian. I am a Christ man,' he says.

## IO

Smuts says that one day, when he has time, he will answer the materialists' criticism of his book, the most important of which, he thinks, is that destruction and self-destruction seem as strong as Holism, or stronger. 'I can answer their objections,' he maintains. 'I have thought further. I have more to say. I am not done with Holism.'

Critics compared him with Professors Lloyd Morgan and Whitehead, neither of whom he had read when he wrote his book, though to-day he admires Whitehead.

Among people, not professed philosophers, his most surprising adherents were Dr. Alfred Adler, once the associate of Freud, founder then of his own psychoanalytical school: 'In Holism I could see clearly described . . . the key of our science, "Individual Psychology"; Professor Arnold Toyn-

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bee, whose conception of history Holism has influenced; and Robert Bridges, who wrote Smuts an extraordinary letter beginning:

'Most puissant and beloved Seer. . . . I hesitate to tell you that for the last six months I have been working on a poetical adumbration of an almost identical thesis. Indeed, I have already inadvertently exposed myself to the charge of plagiarism from your work. . . .'

The poetical adumbration was the *Testament of Beauty*.

But more moving to Smuts than any other tribute was the invitation to preside over the Centenary Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science that opened in London on September 23rd, 1931.

He was hating the way of things in South Africa. He had been defeated by particularly abhorrent means in the 1929 election. South Africa, it seemed, was out to crush him. What this recognition meant to him, how it moved him, may be judged from his answer to the invitation:

'I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you for this unique honour which has come my way. We South Africans are not very demonstrative, and it is difficult to find words fitting to express one's sense of obligation. . . . I can only tell you that nothing in my chequered life has ever happened of which I am prouder than this Presidency.'

A letter from Professor J. S. Haldane, discussing his opening address for the meeting, said: 'I hope you will give part of your address to the question of a divided universe. . . . It will, of course, be expected of you, in view of your book and the memorable discussion last year, and I think that hostile critics will welcome a statement from you as much as scientific men who are moving, often in a rather confused manner, in the same direction. No President in recent (or, indeed, former) times has had anything like the



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same knowledge of philosophy, as well as science, as you have.'

Smuts is hopeful for the future of his Theory. Nevertheless, he cannot believe, and he does not, that from the new cold world into which he plunged with *Holism* it has received the judgment he thinks its due.

## Chapter XLIII

### SMUTS IN AMERICA

#### I

**T**he election Smuts lost in 1929 went against him (election stuff apart) for the following reason:

He had made a speech six months before, declaring in his usual Rhodes-like manner the advent of 'the day . . . when we shall not think of south of the Limpopo only, but when the British states in Africa will all become members of a great African Dominion stretching unbroken throughout Africa.' The Nationalist leaders said this meant Smuts wanted South Africa to unite with Kaffirs. They issued a manifesto headed: 'General Smuts' speech at Ermelo: South Africa a white man's land or a Kaffir land?'

Throughout the election and throughout the country he was pursued by the accusation that he was 'a man who puts himself forward as the apostle of a black Kaffir State of which South Africa is to form so subordinate a constituent part that she will know her own name no more'. There was at stake, the Nationalists maintained, 'the continued existence or the downfall of the white man and his civilisation in South Africa,' and the question 'whether the people of South Africa shall passively stand by and watch South Africa being wiped off the map, as General Smuts desires, in order to be dissolved into a huge Kaffir State stretching from the Cape to Sudan.' Printed cards said: 'Voters! vote

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Nationalist and save our children from the Black Policy of the South African Party.'

The people rose to protect their country against Smuts and his black cohorts. His meetings broke up in tumult. The results of the election were: Nationalists seventy-eight, South African Party sixty-one, Labour Party five, National Council (broken off from the Labour Party) three, Independent one.

Smuts accepted an invitation from England to be the 1929 Rhodes Memorial Lecturer. He had refused the first Rhodes Memorial Lectureship because he was busy with South African politics, and because association with the name of Rhodes was a delicate matter for a man wanting to bring British and Dutch together.

But after this business of a Black Africa—the fighting of an election on the theme that his declared intention was to hand over white South Africa, white children and white civilisation, to the Kaffirs—there seemed no point in further caution. He might as well be called Rhodes Redivivus as the Apostle of a Black Kaffir State.

He had to give not less than two public lectures at Oxford and reside there for a full term of two months and his stipend was five hundred pounds. He spent the Michaelmas term at Oxford. After the way he had lost the 1929 election he found it ironical that his lectures rather disappointed negrophils.

### 2

He went from England to America to take part in the League's Tenth Anniversary celebration in New York.

His lecturing in America, like his lecturing in England, was a matter postponed from other years. Lecture agencies and universities had long sought him. Finally, in January 1928, Johns Hopkins University had invited him to lecture

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on the Schouler Foundation and three months later, by the same mail, he had two other invitations to lecture. A lecture agency offered him five hundred dollars a lecture for fifty lectures: 'I will pay all your expenses from the time you reach New York City until you depart . . . and will furnish a competent secretary for the duration of the speaking tour without expense to you. Furthermore either I or one of my partners will travel with you throughout the speaking tour to protect you from the public, help to handle the newspaper reporters and be of any other service to you as the exigencies of the tour may require. The entire tour will be managed on a highly dignified plane in every way.

'I managed three tours for the Hon. William Howard Taft, and, with his permission, I suggest him as a reference. Recently H.R.H. Prince William of Sweden made two tours of the United States under my management, and he, too, will testify to the dignity and good taste shown in the management of these tours.'

The thought of the lecture manager's companionship, the highly dignified plane on which the entire tour would be managed, the good taste to which the Hon. William Taft and H.R.H. Prince William of Sweden were prepared to testify allured Smuts less than the thought of somehow or other getting to America to *tell* the Americans. . . .

His other invitation of that week was from the Council of Foreign Relations, who, 'while not able to undertake any financial responsibility,' hoped he might be able to address them this year between November 15th and December 15th. He told them, as also Johns Hopkins and the lecture agency, that he could not come this year, but might come another year.

Now, suddenly, and so opportunely since he was already in England, here was this most appropriate offer that could

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have been made him to go to America—an offer from a League group.

He left for America at the end of the year. He travelled through the States and Canada: bearing his testimony to the League of Nations, receiving enormous welcomes and the degrees of great universities. 'What we students are here for,' one of them said at Johns Hopkins, 'is to see a man without money get an honorary degree.'

The tour was a terrific affair, even though the Hearst papers did ask, 'Why must we harbour these foreign "peace" propagandists?' and some wondered how the English would tolerate an American statesman coming to England 'to spread propaganda hostile to the avowed purposes of her Government and perilous to her Empire's safety and defence', and a Chinese student at Wisconsin University remained not quite satisfied. He asked Smuts, in several pages of questions, to tell him 'and the whole world' if he accepted the honour of being the real originator of the League. If he accepted the honour would he (Question three, a, b, c, d) say how, when, where, why he got the idea? If he did not accept the honour would he (Question four, a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h) say how, from whom, when, where, why and so on he got the idea? Would he answer if the League was functioning successfully? . . . 'You may give some indications or personal opinions if you are not sure.'

The negroes of America were enthusiastic about Smuts until he sympathetically, but unfortunately, told them that the black man was 'the most patient of all creatures next to the ass'.

The Jews came to him anxious about Palestine, where Jews had recently been murdered in Arab riots.

Smuts calls it a justification of his life that he has stood unalterably by the Jews. . . .

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Despite the fact that human beings hate one another more than they love one another, they have the strange habit of believing the world owes them something for merely existing, and the world has the even stranger habit of acknowledging the obligation. Whipped, not by religion, law, love, pleasure or profit, but only by their arbitrary conscience, people take upon themselves duties towards their fellow beings.

Smuts has taken upon himself the unpopular cause of the Jews as he has taken upon himself the causes of the League, the British Commonwealth and the Union of South Africa, which, in his time and place, have been unpopular too: 'Whether I am in South Africa or London, or wherever I may be in future, I will serve the cause, not because it is a Jewish cause, but because it is a great human cause.'

He now reassured the American Jews about their hopes in Palestine, telling them that as, in the past, their 'small people, inhabiting a small homeland, had made a contribution to the cause of humanity such as no other nation', so in the future, too, they might 'evolve there a system . . . of benefit to mankind'. For this Palestine was theirs again to go to if they wished. 'One of the greatest vows in history' had proclaimed it, and Britain's hand endorsed it.

Nine months, however, were not past when he was cabling from South Africa to the British Government concerning 'our present Palestine Policy which marks retreat from Balfour Declaration. Declaration was definite promise to Jewish world that Policy of National Home would be actively prosecuted and was intended to rally powerful Jewish influence for Allied cause at darkest hour of war. As such it was approved by Governments of the United States and other Allies and accepted in good faith by British Government. It represents debt of honour which must be

discharged in full at all costs. Circumstances of original Declaration were far too solemn to permit of any wavering now. I would most solemnly urge Government statement should be issued that terms of Balfour Declaration will be fully carried out in good faith, and Government's Palestine Policy be recast accordingly.'

And he was not yet home from his American visit when he had to protest with still greater indignation against the retreat from a course to which he had no less strongly pledged himself. For the news he had on board ship was that not only the Nationalists but practically the whole of his own Party had, during his absence, voted for the second reading of a Quota Bill designed almost entirely to restrain Eastern Europeans (in effect, Jews) from further immigration to South Africa.

He sent urgent cables and arrived home to fight the third reading—lone-handed and unavailingly, except that, as he says, he 'saved the women and children': through his intercession provision was made for women and children overseas to join their husbands and fathers in South Africa.

Four years later, when the Nazi feeling about Jews spread to other countries; and in the Union and South-West there was much Nazi propaganda (shirts, swastikas, youth groups, attacks on Jews, 'Dear friends in Afrika' on the radio) because Germany wanted South-West again; and Smuts persisted in defending the Jews and in his Rectorial Address at St. Andrews made Freedom his pointed theme, the Union's police had information that Smuts' life was not safe. . . .

So that, when he flew back to South Africa after St. Andrews, protective guards met him at the African airports; and for months after he could not climb the Cape mountains or take a long walk on his own farm without

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being unobtrusively (yet too obtrusively for him) attended by plain clothes police.

It was while Smuts was fighting the Quota Bill that the British Association invited him to preside at their Centenary Meeting to be held in London in September, 1931.



## Chapter XLIV

### OFF GOLD! OFF RACIALISM!

#### I

**T**o the Centenary Meeting there came five thousand scientists from all parts of the world, and so many people had to be turned away from the hall where Smuts gave his Presidential address (whose subject was *The Scientific World Picture of To-day*) that he had to speak also at overflow meetings. As a preliminary to challenging the world's greatest scientists on their own ground he made the opening speech too at the Faraday Exhibition.

They say that London's largest queues, during the next few days, were to be found outside the halls where Smuts presided.

Some days he himself gave several addresses. One day he attended thirteen sections of the Association. He spoke on anything from philosophy to agriculture. He presided at Sir James Jeans' *Beyond the Milky Way*. He presided at the Clerk Maxwell centenary celebrations at Cambridge. It is his fate, Smuts says, to be for ever among politicians. What a happiness, by contrast, the Centenary Meeting!

The Association went from London to York, and at York he received the city's Freedom. And all the time there were official-social-guest-of-honour-civic affairs, several a day, and everywhere, too, he had to speak.

But yet, while he was presiding, lecturing, listening, seeing, feasting, quite another sort of matter was engaging his

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attention. In the month of the Centenary Meeting England had gone off gold, and Smuts, speaking to economists, considering the things likely now to happen in the world, was sending urgent cables to South Africa to follow England off gold at once.

The Nationalists said wasn't that just like Smuts? Even from England he had to cast 'the shadow of conflict and disagreement over South Africa.'

If it needed anything to convince the Nationalists that South Africa's proper policy was precisely not to follow England off gold, it was the fact that Smuts advocated this course.

But it did not need anything. Almost everybody supported the Government. Shopkeepers said it would bankrupt them to pay forty per cent more for their goods. Lenders and savers of money said they would lose forty per cent on their investments. Economists said the cost of living would go up to an intolerable degree. Smuts' own party agreed with the Government.

The public at large could not understand this seemingly mad idea of a country going off gold that produced half the gold in the world. They wondered, more or less amiably, if it might not be a political manoeuvre on the part of Smuts—a plan against the Government. Only a man here and a man there and a few men on the stock exchange and the gold mines themselves understood it. The gold mines understood it because gold to them was not just a symbol and a system, but a marketable commodity—something one worked and weighed and packed in boxes as other South Africans sold wool or maize or oranges.

While, therefore, gold had, on the one hand, a sort of mystic stability, it had, on the other hand, a material value that varied as the value of money varied. If money was cheap one got more for one's gold. If there was a thing that

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unquestionably rose in price when one went off gold so that money sank, it was gold itself.

The gold mines added their persuasions to the persuasions of Smuts.

Hoggenheimer and Smuts! A fine pair of advisers!

When Smuts returned to South Africa in November he found South Africa already strangled, as he said, in 'a noose of gold', unable to compete in overseas markets against countries whose exchange was cheap, in absolute retreat before Australia, whose money was lower even than England's, so that for the same sort of goods South Africa sold she could afford to ask England only ten shillings against South Africa's pound.

### 2

Parliament met for its 1932 session and Smuts continued his campaign against the gold standard. For twelve days the House talked about nothing else. The attacks on Smuts were biblical in their ecstatic denunciation and no less holy the Government's conviction of its own righteousness. It was dishonesty, it was death for a solvent country to leave the gold standard. 'We will stand by that policy and we will adhere to it while this House, as has hitherto been the case, supports us in this policy.'

General Hertzog pronounced Fourteen Points against Smuts, and, in the course of his speech, had four times to be called to order. It was during this speech Smuts surprised everyone by objecting to an insult.

He said a month later that the Government was not a Government, but a terror; not a political party but a commando. He published, in contrast to the gold standard budget of the Minister of Finance, which showed a deficit of two hundred thousand, his own sterling budget, which, allowing for benefits and remissions to civil servants and

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taxpayers, showed a surplus of seven hundred and fifty thousand.

It was an extreme under-prophecy of what did actually happen when South Africa went off gold, but it was received with raucous derision by the Government, and even the country at large thought it rather a fairy-tale imagining.

The depression increased. Farmers could not sell their produce: they could not pay shopkeepers, who could not pay wholesalers, who could not pay shippers. Little investors could not get their interest from big investors who could not get their interest. There was a chain of bankruptcies. The Provincial Council of the Orange Free State in effect declared itself bankrupt.

There was also a drought.

It is generally a drought that makes South Africans ask themselves if Government can really be following the right policy, and decide it cannot possibly be. It puts them into that sort of mood.

The conviction began to spread that the Nationalists' course was run.

Towards the end of the year a new young South African Party candidate won a by-election by a startling majority. . . .

On the Bench of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in Bloemfontein sat Tielman Roos, throughout his political life Smuts' most bitter opponent—in private life a man who could forgive anything but rude manners. He had given up his political life because of illness.

To-day he was better in health, but unendurably bored. The worst results of the depression were manifesting themselves in the province he was now living in. From his seat of impartial judgment things did not look as they had looked from his seat in the House. What, at such a crisis,

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was he dully doing here—he (his friends reminded him) the Lion of the North?

Three days before Christmas of 1932 Tielman Roos resigned from the Bench.

It was the parliamentary vacation. Members were gone from Cape Town to their homes all over the Union. Where was Smuts? No one could find Smuts. The first Smuts heard of the resignation of Tielman Roos was when a newspaper man traced him to a mountain top in the wilds of the Northern Transvaal.

He came down from his mountain top to find the whole Union excited about the emergence of Roos.

Roos, not leonine at all to look at, but short, dark, bald, stout, with aquiline nose and blue eyes unexpectedly sharp in his jovial face, with graceful manners and generous habits, had the sort of popularity possessed by neither General Hertzog nor Smuts. Politics apart, General Hertzog, no less than Smuts, had the dignity that is the Boer inheritance, even, many said, an irresistible charm.

But yet Roos was something they absolutely were not—an instinctive boon companion. He loved to sit about with people, just people—to sit in public places making jokes and brooding schemes. Whatever his politics, he was intimately liked.

It was not, however, the popularity of Roos that now caused Smuts to hurry down his mountain. It was his policy. Roos himself was appealing to the country, not on his popularity but on that startling policy. The startling policy was the fifteen-month old policy, the erstwhile thunder and opportunity of Smuts: Off Gold!

As if no one had ever heard the words 'Off Gold' before, the country leapt to Roos' call. He offered peace alike to Nationalists and South African Party men. He linked himself with both, claiming that old friends of his, now with

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General Hertzog, awaited only his word to transfer their allegiance from General Hertzog to himself, and that, again, his principles were now the principles of Smuts: off gold! off racialism! He was not only the Lion of the North. He was the saviour of South Africa.

He spoke to crowded halls. He rode through vociferous streets. Once more the fate of Smuts was exemplified: that he saw things too long before others saw them; that he spoke before others were ready to hear.

The words Smuts had been saying for fifteen months reached the ears of South Africa through the echo of Tielman Roos.

### 3

This was how Off Gold worked in South Africa.

As soon as Tielman Roos took up the words of Smuts it became clear that with both of them against the Government's policy, with followers of General Hertzog secretly (as Roos claimed) behind Roos, the two must have their will and the country go off gold.

South Africa's pound was to-day worth forty-two per cent more than England's sterling pound—also forty-two per cent more than its own pound would be worth when it followed sterling. What, anticipating the results of the Roos conspiracy, was the obvious thing to do? To send money, of course, to England, there to swell to the measure of sterling—eventually to be brought back when South Africa's rate matched England's rate.

The banks, the post offices, the building societies were thronged with struggling clients. Nobody did anything but collect money to send overseas—except those who knew even better than to send money overseas. For three days, and until the transmission of money was officially stayed, South Africans sent their pounds—millions of

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pounds—overseas. The country was, in practical fact, already off gold, when the Government, having vowed to perish rather than abandon gold—refused to perish.

South Africa began the year 1933 on a sterling basis—with General Hertzog still in Government. The money that had been sent to England came back duly increased. Debtors paid their nauseated creditors with their new cheap money. The creditors, the careful investors in public loans, insurance policies, building societies, mortgages—the people who had always paid their way with the noble gold pound—suffered the chagrin of the prodigal's good brother. Thrift, it appeared, was simple nonsense. The logic of the economists, anybody's logic, was equally simple nonsense. With complete unreason, prices that should have gone up, went down.

Only gold went up. Quartz gold, and also the gold that, as Samuel Butler said, came not from quartz alone, but whose richest lodes lay in the eyes and ears of the public.

It had hitherto been worth in South Africa four guineas an ounce. It became worth now six pounds, and then seven pounds, an ounce.

And this did not mean that gold shares rose only by the difference between four guineas and six or seven pounds. The people—who had known even better than to send money overseas, who had immediately bought gold shares with their money—had known all about that. Gold shares rose, not like the gold pound, forty-two per cent; they rose a hundred, two hundred, five or six hundred per cent, because the appreciation in the value of gold shares was not merely the difference between the gold pound and sterling, but the difference between the old profits and the new.

Mines that, on four guineas an ounce, had been able to make a few shillings profit or no profit at all on six or seven pounds an ounce could make (if they worked as be-

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fore, only their good ground) a profit of two or three pounds an ounce. Rich mines were, indeed, no longer forced to work only their good ground. It paid now to work even poor ground.

And low grade mines, abandoned mines, untouched mines became suddenly profitable. And the lives of mines were enormously prolonged. And, with half its gold coming from South Africa, the world's adherence to gold as a medium of exchange was also prolonged. And with the world's old economic system, its old civilisation was prolonged.

Dozens of new gold companies were floated. There was an option over almost every farm in the Transvaal. Men who, traditionally, were millionaires became, in fact, millionaires. Gamblers were the prudent fellows of the day; prodigals, the prophets. Dead bits of scrip, buried in forgotten drawers, sprang to life again. On one boom day ninety-five different gold shares were dealt in on the Johannesburg stock exchange. Brokers, too busy to speak to their clients, much less advise them, made anything up to three thousand pounds a day in the purely mechanical course of their agency. A large part of next year's income tax came from the stockbrokers of Johannesburg.

When shares rose to a point where the interest they yielded was less than in the old years, the cautious people who had for so long resisted temptation found themselves just about ready to succumb; and, having waited and waited, they tremblingly plunged. And then the shares began to recede. And those shares duly slumped too whose gold lay in the eyes and ears of the public.

## 4

One reason why dividends fell was that the Government took what the mines considered an outrageous toll of their



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profits to give to the farmers. The demands of the farmers were such, the resentment of the mines such, that Smuts had to warn the farmers against creating a fresh disturbance between town and country—in other words that he did not speak: disturbance between Briton and Boer.

The Government had also a preponderant share in the mines it leased.

The boom brought the Government money from every direction—chiefly, from every direction in the Transvaal. The whole Union rested luxuriously on the Transvaal.

### 5

For the prosperity of the mines meant the prosperity of Johannesburg. The boom brought people to Johannesburg who wanted homes, offices, shops, cars, fun—also simply gifts of money.

People in London bought shares not only in Johannesburg's mines, but in any enterprise in Johannesburg. Johannesburg grew so tall and wide that within two years it was a new city. Not beautiful, just vitally, urgently new.

More white miners by the thousand, more black miners by the ten thousand, came to work on the expanding mines. Men in the building trades found all the employment they wanted. What-to-do-with-our-boys ceased to be so terrible a problem. The trains, that were a State monopoly, carried more and more passengers and goods to and from Johannesburg. Money poured into the treasury from customs and personal taxes.

Smuts' estimate of what would happen when the country abandoned gold was swamped in the overwhelming result.

The Government wiped out its deficit. It had so much money, it hardly knew where first to spend it. It spoke as proudly of its gold mines as if it had never derided them as

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the curse of South Africa. It ignored the fact that all this bliss might have been had fifteen months sooner, and the country been fifty millions richer, if it had gone off gold when Smuts first demanded it.

Lucky South Africa!

Happy Government!

Lucky South Africa under the happy Government of—  
well, naturally, General Hertzog.

## Chapter XLV

### 'IF I CANNOT BE TRUSTED'

#### I

When Tielman Roos, in January of 1933, with the country just shifted from gold to sterling, the future unknown and the people desperate, called upon all parties to unite under him, he meant that Smuts (since their policies were one) should come in with him and he would produce out of his hat those secret followers now sitting behind General Hertzog on the Government benches.

Whereupon they would go, he and Smuts, to the country; and they would win the election; and he would choose five Nationalist Ministers; and Smuts would choose five South African Party Ministers; and there would be one Labour Minister; and Roos would be Prime Minister.

Only a few weeks ago, with the Government refusing to abandon gold and the people so bitter, his own return to power had seemed certain. Now Roos had compelled the Government to go off gold. What more could an election do? The gold issue was dead. Their separate chances on that issue were dead. His own plans were frustrated.

Smuts asked Roos if he could name his adherents and Roos said: for their sakes, he couldn't. Smuts asked him if he could, at least, guarantee their adherence, and Roos said: frankly, he couldn't.

There were men in Smuts' party ready for sacrifice.

They were prepared to sacrifice Smuts. Excited by the country's excitement over Roos, they did not think it mattered that his parliamentary following was undisclosed, they magnanimously forgave him the things he had done to Smuts and said of him, and they thought Smuts should go in under his leadership.

Others disagreed. They asked: Who were these mysterious followers of Roos? How could one undertake to give Cabinet appointments to a crew of ghosts? Why Roos, with this invisible party, to lead, and not Smuts, stronger than at any time within the last ten years? Why abandon Smuts?

In their caucus meetings the admirers of Roos came near prevailing. But in the end Smuts himself objected. He felt he could not serve under a master so mercurial and incalculable.

What Roos himself maintained was that only he could swing the two parties together. Remembering his ecstatic progress from Bloemfontein to Cape Town, he had reason to think so.

There was something, however, he had not realised so soon as Smuts: that, being delivered, the country had no further need of deliverers; that, with the gold issue past, the magic of both of them was gone. Who, indeed, in these days, troubled much about politics at all? While Roos was negotiating with South African Party leaders, now here, now there, the great boom in shares had begun. A fortnight after his descent on the country the only interest was the sharemarket. Women, no less than men, poor no less than rich, had only one real concern: the stockmarket. The question was not Smuts or Roos or Hertzog (except that Smuts might be kinder to the mines than the others) but shares one affectionately called Johnnies or Sallies or by some other intimate name.

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Already, in Johannesburg and Cape Town, Roos had had a revelation: no financial backing. The rumours that said he had demanded and received enough to provide him for life in return for abandoning his security on the Bench were wrong. His own hopes that men, suddenly enriched through his agency, would stand behind him were equally wrong. Hostility was even created in many by their sense of debt to him: they had to feel justified in ignoring that debt. . . . The truth was that he was given nothing—or nothing much—because he had nothing left to give in return.

His first journey—from Bloemfontein to Johannesburg, from Johannesburg to Cape Town—had been one long triumph. His journey back from Cape Town to Johannesburg and Bloemfontein was, by contrast, heartbreaking.

As dramatically as the feeling had manifested itself that he was the saviour of South Africa, so, dramatically, it now manifested itself that he was not. No crowds met him where his train stopped. It was very hot on the train, and he sat in his coupé, melting and dazed, saying he had to have the leadership—the leadership or nothing: he would return on his shield, or carrying it.

The end was that Smuts offered him, in a Cabinet of ten, four places, including his own, Smuts to lead, Roos to be Deputy Prime Minister.

He refused the offer. He returned on his shield.

## 2

For other things had been happening than his talks with Smuts. The country had had a fright and a lesson. Political passions were weakened by the depression and drought. The business had begun of people, wanting security and protection, ceasing (at least for the moment) to be enemies. And with Smuts continually declaring that peace, not lead-

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ership, was all that mattered to him; with General Hertzog shaken by the gold crisis, his difficulties of the last fifteen months, the haunting thought of those unknown Roosites behind him ready to desert at any moment—what also had been happening was that men in the two parties had been looking into one another's eyes, wondering if something couldn't be done to end this harassing position.

Towards the end of January Smuts moved in the House that since the Government had remained in office while abandoning the gold standard, and was thus committed to a policy it condemned as fatal to the country, its proper course was to resign and thus open the way for a National Government.

He said his motion was less a motion of No Confidence than an appeal for a new start by means of a National Government.

General Hertzog repelled the suggestion of bad faith: he said that when his Government had sworn never to leave the gold standard, it had meant: never voluntarily. He repelled also the suggestion of a National Government.

There were men in the South African Party who wondered what the Nationalists—considering their bitterness in power—would do if they ever lost power. One almost dared not let them lose power.

The parties met in their caucuses.

The debate continued.

### 3

One day Smuts left the House and climbed a mountain. If he had to cross off both Roos and Hertzog, then what? Two insecure parties and a shadowy third. Endless racial wrangling. Again the country stultified. Was there no other plan?

There was another plan—failing all else, the final plan.



J.C. SMUTS WITH THE DUKE OF KENT AND





He had been proved right on the gold issue. The country had suffered through the Government's mistaken policy. It was tired of enmity. It was turning from the Government. It was turning to him. Could he not do what Roos had failed to do—appeal to the country, just his personal self—appeal to all men of goodwill to unite under him?

He came down the mountain to find J. H. Hofmeyr waiting at his house.

4

J. H. Hofmeyr was a kinsman and namesake of that Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr who, nearly forty years ago, had sent Smuts to speak for Rhodes. He had been a wonder-child, a Rhodes scholar, and in his twenties principal of the Rand University and Administrator of the Transvaal. In his thirties, he had refused a further term as administrator and the High Commissionership in London to enter Parliament as a Smuts man, and, it seemed, his destined successor.

He had been the principal negotiator with Roos, and among the strongest opponents of a Roos-Smuts coalition.

The news he now brought was that yesterday he had accidentally met an influential Nationalist and taken the opportunity to talk to him. They had commiserated with one another over the state of the country (it was only the first month off gold) and the needless enmity between their two parties which forbade the country to prosper.

J. H. Hofmeyr had admitted that a Roos-Smuts combination offered no cure.

The Nationalist had suggested that a Hertzog-Smuts combination was still not beyond hope.

Despite the public refusal?

He might have more to tell another time, said the Nationalist.

He had more to tell next day. He spoke, one might say, officially. He said that if, before the debate ended, Smuts in replying were to repeat his offer of a joint National Government, General Hertzog would not refuse. . . .

There were those things Smuts had been brooding over on the mountain. He had been not only physically, but spiritually ‘measuring the gulf’, daring ‘the final bound’.

Suddenly this check.

He answered presently that peace—peace between the two parties—a National Government—had, naturally, his blessing. Peace was what one had always striven for. . . . He said he thought he himself would remain outside. . . .

His friend with the tidings was extremely amazed. That Smuts should be attacked and rejected—should ignore attack and rejection—was something South Africans took so much for granted—was it possible Smuts had feelings?

What a revelation!

It was a revelation too of how *little* everything would suddenly be in South Africa without Smuts.

He told Smuts it would be intolerable for South African Party Ministers to enter General Hertzog’s Cabinet without their leader.

There was not much he could add to that. There was no stronger appeal to be made. Smuts said he would think it over during the night.

He had to consider during the night what a future under General Hertzog would mean to him, what it would mean to his colleagues without him, and what to the country if no union took place.

To him it would mean this: He had brought himself to a point where he was willing to forget the past and unite with General Hertzog—if necessary, under his leadership. He had appealed for a National Government—so he had done his duty. He had been refused—so he was free. He

had that sense of combined bitterness, irony, satisfaction and release which follows a sacrifice scornfully rejected.

Now, during the night, he had thought of this release, or what he might do with freedom: he could follow his independent way in politics, or give up politics to write his memories of the Boer War, add to his thoughts on Holism, better his plan of a League of Nations. The world was large outside Africa. . . .

And here the old business faced him again. The clichés of thirty years ago, that he had reinforced by thirty years of action, could not yet cease work: 'Let us bury the dead cow, and give one another our hands and help one another along the road of life. Let us wipe the slate clean and extend the hand of friendship. . . .'

His duty (another cliché!) was not, it seemed, done.

There were those prospective Ministers, Patrick Duncan, Deneys Reitz and the others, that J. H. Hofmeyr had mentioned. His party was composed of Englishmen and Dutchmen who had equally suffered to follow his path of peace. They would all feel themselves deserted if he now chose to go his own way. The cause of National Government itself might suffer. . . .

He agreed next day to see General Hertzog. In the afternoon he turned the debate back towards conciliation.

When, in Parliament, he again offered that nearly exhausted hand of friendship it was accepted.

The terms on which the two parties came together were, in effect, the terms Smuts had rejected in 1920. He could now, in his strength, agree to them. He had even a pride in letting General Hertzog lead him. He was to be Deputy Prime Minister. His actual office was that of Justice, and so he came back, as he says, to his beginnings: State Attorney.

Nationalists and South African Party, together, on a Coalition platform, appealed to the country. There was,

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after all, said Smuts, no fundamental difference between himself and General Hertzog except on the native question, and even members of his own party differed from him, he added, on the native question.

He said it lightly, like that. It was not a moment to bear down heavily on the thought that harassed his conscience.

### 5

The native question was a thought that had always harassed Smuts' conscience, and still it harasses his conscience, and it also angers him.

Here he is, the professed apostle of Freedom, and he would like to tell his heart and the world and he cannot: 'I do not deviate from my principle of Freedom. That is absolute.' For if he gives freedom—freedom as he understands it—to the natives, white South Africa breaks: it cracks of itself; black overwhelms it. So he feels.

From the same motive, therefore, that he maintains Jellicoe was right not to risk his fleet and the war and the British Empire at Jutland, he maintains that South Africa cannot risk its white civilisation. There is his ideal; there is life as it is.

He said at Union: 'I personally am not against the native. I am against the policy of oppression. I would help the native in every legitimate way in accordance with his present requirements. But I cannot forget that civilisation has been built up in this country by the white race, that we are the guardians of liberty, justice and all the elements of progress in South Africa. The franchise is the last argument: more powerful than the sword or rifle; and the day we give away this final protection we possess we shall have to consider very carefully what we are doing.' . . . He said during the Great War: 'It is useless to run black and white at the same moment, and to subject them to the same machinery

of legislation. White and black are different not only in colour, but also in mind. They are different in political status, and their political institutions should be different.’ He spoke again of ‘blacks looking after themselves according to their own ways of life and forms of government’, and, in 1921, told the Imperial Conference that in South Africa ‘the whole basis of our particular system rests on inequality and on recognising the fundamental differences which exist in the structure of our population. We started as a small white colony in a black continent. In the Union the vast majority of our citizens are black, probably the majority of them are in a semi-barbarous state still, and we have never in our laws recognised any system of equality. It is the bedrock of our constitution. . . . That is the fundamental position from which we start. That is the colour question.’ . . .

But is not this, a foreigner might ask, the attitude of General Hertzog and his followers? Where, really, is the fundamental difference between them that Smuts spoke of when he and General Hertzog were uniting?

Well, there is the fundamental difference that Smuts’ conception of the whole universe—the very essence of his holism—is freedom. He does violence to his deepest principle, he hurts his faith, he hurts himself, if he turns from it. There is also his Cape tradition. There is also his consciousness and colouring of world thought. It is a battle without end between his spirit and the day’s compulsions—a losing battle for his spirit.

Now when people of General Hertzog’s way of thinking go against the natives they do it out of a conviction rooted in their history, their feeling, their fear and even their Bible: ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.’ They are not torn. They act as their conscience fully directs them.

And so for all that Smuts dare not give the natives what people outside Africa think he ought to give them, he still wants to give them intolerably more than most South Africans think it good and wise for them to have.

The result is that, while in South Africa his own people turn against him for being pro-native, overseas there rises sometimes the question of how far he can be sincere in advocating other human causes since he is anti-native; and, as to the world he means South Africa, he is identified too with things done in South Africa of which he himself disapproves.

Pushed as he is by the ideals he has maintained from his youth, stopped as he is by the necessities of the day, he compromises. ‘As history teaches us,’ he said when he was negotiating with Milner at the close of the Boer War, ‘it has happened before that questions were solved by compromises.’ Bitter-enders of different kinds call it a defect in Smuts that he yields too much. To set against this there is the fact that he will also yield himself. And there remains the final result, as he said when he was taunted with climbing down to Gandhi: ‘I do not mind climbing down. I am accused of being too prone to climbing down. . . . I secure my object at the same time. . . .’

‘What,’ he asks to-day, ‘with the mass of white South Africans absolutely intent on crushing the natives—what, as a practical man, can I do except compromise: give the natives as much as possible without breaking our whole social structure? The consideration is not whether I am to suffer or not for a principle—I fought my own people in 1914, my brothers of the Boer War, because of my word to England: that was suffering—no, the consideration is whether we are to have anarchy or not in South Africa.’

He had to compromise again in 1936.

It was the time when General Hertzog at last brought be-

fore Parliament Native Bills he had been cherishing for nine years. The very first had to do with the abolition of the Cape native vote—their pre-union equal-rights male privilege, unshared by the natives of the other provinces, entrenched in the South Africa Act. That vote no longer represented an equal-rights privilege because it was based on an educational and property test which, after General Hertzog's Government brought in universal suffrage for Europeans, ceased to limit white people. Still, their names on the common voters' roll stood to them for the symbol of their common citizenship.

In matters affecting the franchise of natives Parliament sits as one. No party divisions. No division between Assembly and Senate. A two-thirds majority required. It was not only a question of the Cape natives losing their vote and their right to representation in the Union Parliament, it was also a question of the United Party under General Hertzog splitting and all the peace work disintegrating. Suddenly a compromise was put before Parliament that offered to place the Cape natives on a separate roll, with representation in Parliament by a special body of three Europeans.

It was frankly—even proudly—called a compromise: the Cape natives retained their vote: still, their names did not contaminate the common voters' roll.

Practically the whole United Party, even Liberals among them and Liberals all over South Africa, thought this a brilliant solution, the party breathed its unanimous relief, it felt itself at last a united party—the Smuts men said it was grand that the Hertzog men so recognised the black man's right to vote for a white parliament, it was a terrific advance. They said the symbol of the black man's equal rights was retained.

There were diehard negrophils, however, who said it

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was not. They said the whole point was the common voters’ roll. It seemed to them that the Cape native vote was now in the position of Hans Andersen’s man who lost his shadow: it was the shadow that proved the substance: it was the name on the common voters’ roll, not the meagre body of the vote itself, that showed it to be something other than a ghost. On a separate roll, with separate representation, the symbol of equal rights for every civilised man was gone from the native vote. Like Hans Andersen’s man without the shadow, it was dead. . . .

The natives were offered a number of other rights—desirable but separate native rights. They will be given more, says Smuts. . . .

There is a thing he often says:

‘We have always trouble in South Africa. Yet that trouble is continually growing less. It is as much as one can hope for in the building of a nation—that trouble may grow slowly less until at last there is something like peace.’

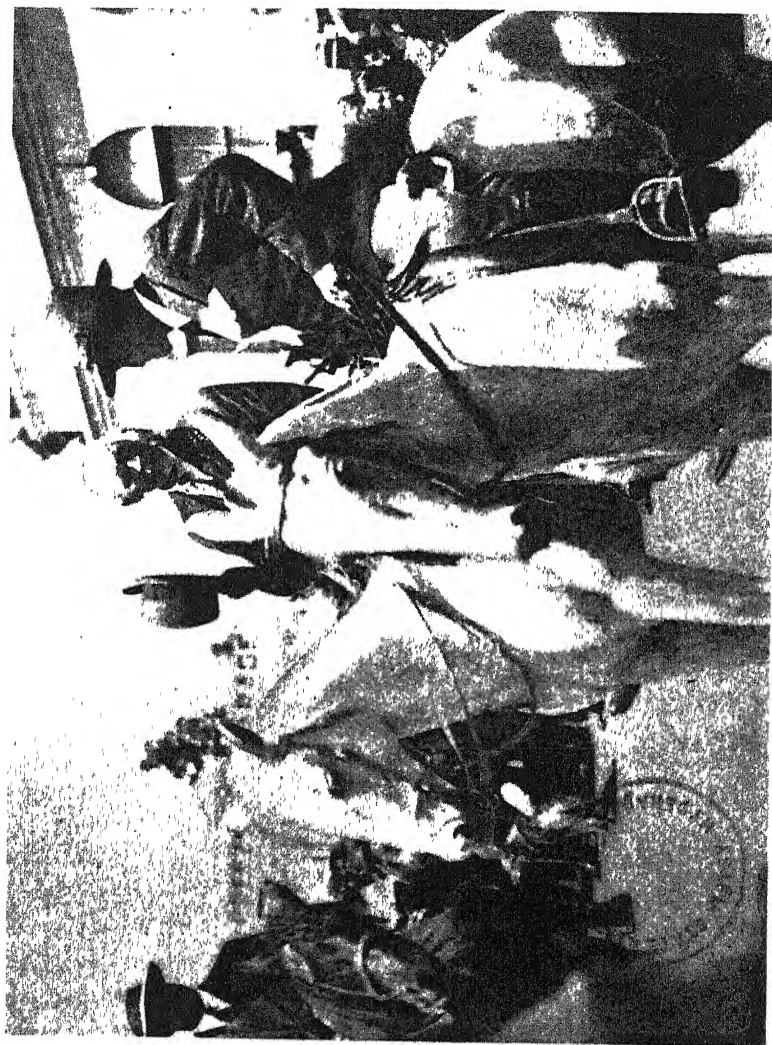
As long as fear exists, he feels, there cannot be peace. Once it is established that the natives, while they so greatly preponderate, may not vote beside Europeans, once that fear of their equal rights is gone, there is a clearer way to peace. Let peace come between Europeans, and it will be for the good also, Smuts thinks, of the natives.

The compromise of 1936 was carried by a hundred and sixty-nine votes to eleven. J. H. Hofmeyr led the eleven.

## 6

At the elections of May 1933 the Coalition Party stormed the country. It was really coalition. For the first time in twenty years Smuts’ name was cheered in General Hertzog’s constituency. In a district where he had led his guerilla fighters Smuts supported the candidature of the sternest of all the Nationalists, Dr. Malan, once a Calvinist min-







ister, and Dr. Malan was returned. In the home district of Tielman Roos he supported a Nationalist against Roos (leading a party of his own) and Roos was defeated.

Only two followers of Roos came in, and of these one presently joined Labour, and then Roos himself told the other to go to the United Party.

It was over for Roos.

He had demanded the highest and lost everything. His position was gone and his security. The people, that loving public he had depended upon, had rejected him as they had acclaimed him, and almost in the same breath.

Like Smuts he had no share in the prosperity they had jointly brought the country. He returned at fifty-five to the Bar he had many years ago abandoned. The illness that had compelled him to the quiet life of the Appeal Court Bench declared itself again. He sat about with people as before—not complaining, still smiling and courtly. He died soon, very poor, troubled about his young family. Smuts unveiled a memorial to him.

7

And now, after Coalition, the thought was fusion. The Lord gave his sign. The most astonishing rains fell in 1934.

Yet now, trouble again.

Dr. Malan was not happy. He had said, after the summation of the Statute of Westminster: 'Instead of looking upon Great Britain as the conqueror, we look upon her now as the mother of our freedom' (15.12.26). 'Republican Independence is dead' (14.12.26). 'The independence which the Nationalist Party has always lived for is now attained, and cannot well be more complete' (30.9.27). 'South Africa to-day can only secede from greater freedom and safety to lesser freedom and safety . . .' (7.10.27).

Yet to-day he was not happy. He would not sit in the

new Cabinet, he would not submit to the old South Africa Act, he would not rest in the British Commonwealth, he would not rest in the Lord, he was not happy.

Young men about him heard the tale of his unhappiness, and theirs, and South Africa's. Because everything was booming, South Africa might *seem* happy, might even *feel* happy. No, no. South Africa was blighted at the core: it faced unutterable calamities; it was the shamed, doomed, damned chattel of England. The more prosperous South Africa became—until it became the most prosperous country in the world so that its people held their heads as those who know they are envied—the more Dr. Malan's unhappiness increased.

The first thing he demanded after Coalition was that South Africa should ‘start off with a new South Africa Act. We must be free in the international sense of the word.’

It was the price of fusion.

Smuts' belief concerning constitutions is that the less said about them the better. But if a new South Africa Act was the price of fusion—in other words, of peace—let a new Act be. What did it really matter? If South Africa wanted to secede, it would secede; and if it didn't, it wouldn't. In the meantime, let there be peace.

The public gathered from Members of Parliament and newspapers that the Act established South Africa's adherence to the British Empire, and also its detachment from the British Empire; that it clarified the position and also fortunately meant nothing; that it was extremely subtle and yet only a simple statement, following the Great War and the Treaty of Versailles and the League Covenant and the Locarno Pact and the Kellogg Pact and the Balfour Declaration and the Imperial Conference and the Statute of Westminster, of the sovereign position of the Union of South Africa within the British Commonwealth of nations.

The new Act—the Status of the Union Act—set out, in short, to please everyone. And, naturally, it pleased no one.

The Malanites asked why England might keep her naval base at the Cape, why South Africa did not declare its neutrality and independence. And they could not be satisfied by General Hertzog. Least of all could his own state, the Free State, his strongest support of other days, be satisfied by him.

If only Dr. Malan (after him the Free State) had been happy General Hertzog would have been happy too. He had fought with a bitter, tenacious, single-minded courage, and with any weapon that came to hand, for the honour of his people; and the difference between him and Smuts had been that where Smuts had asked for peace with honour, he had insisted on honour before peace; and honour being now, he felt, established, he was ready also for peace, he was ready, at least, to be happy—only Dr. Malan wouldn't let him.

There began to happen between General Hertzog and Dr. Malan (in opposition, his party the Purified Nationalists) the things that had happened between General Hertzog and Smuts. As firmly as General Hertzog had stood against Smuts, so, henceforth, he stood firmly beside him. It went so far, his new passion went so far, that, unearthing a secret society whose object was South Africa for the Boers alone, he spoke to the followers of Dr. Malan, in the vehement tones he had once directed at the followers of Smuts, saying it could 'no longer be suffered that a secret society consisting of only one section of the people—the Afrikaans-speaking people—should sit and scheme day and night, inside the House and outside of it, to rob the other section of their rights. . . .'

Smuts had to satisfy the English-speaking South Africans.

For if the Malanites were not pleased with the new Act, still less were many Englishmen. If Dr. Malan asked why the naval base for England, why no neutrality, why no secession, they asked: but why, in the new Act, South Africa a 'sovereign independent state': and so the divisibility of the Crown, the *right* to secede and the *right* of neutrality?

Smuts went among them and spoke from platforms as he cannot speak to individuals, telling them how, if he had considered only his own interests, his party might have been in power and he himself Prime Minister—and South Africa cleft in two like Ireland.

'Our status', he told them, 'dates from the Great War. He showed them his appointment from the King 'to take part, to sign and to do what every other delegate was empowered to do at the Peace Conference'—the testament of South Africa's separate status.

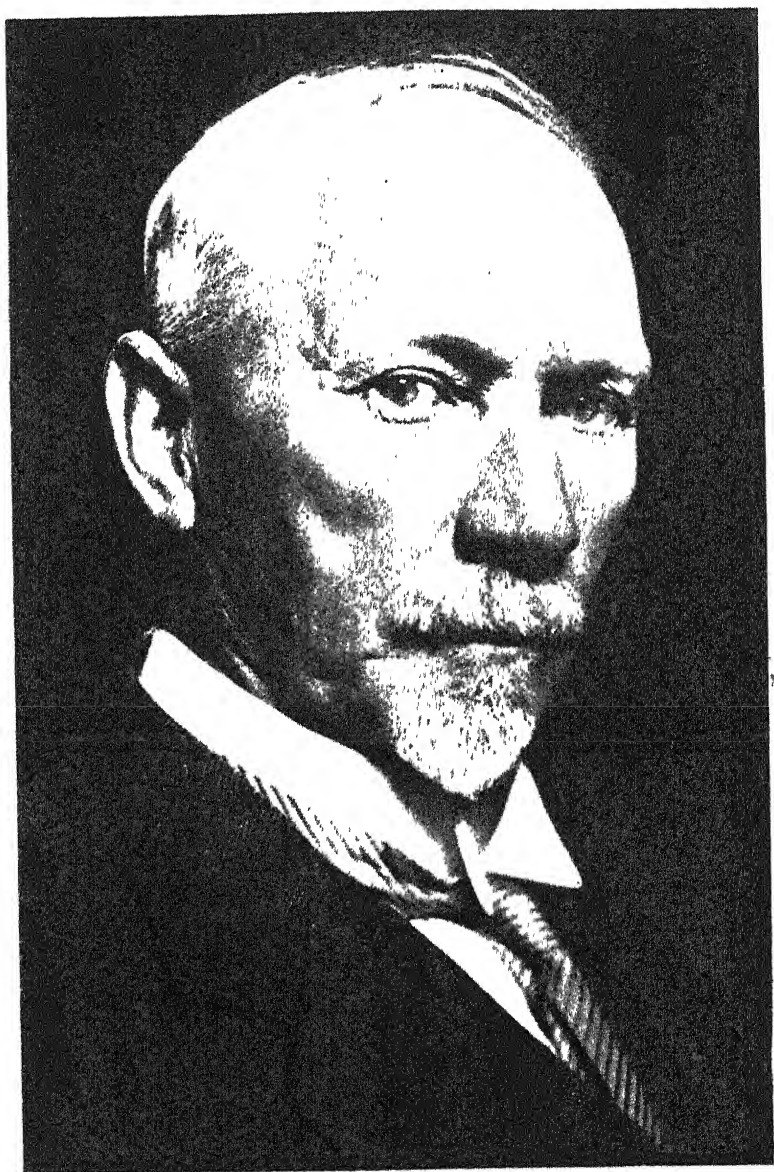
'You English', he pleaded, 'need ask for nothing. Why should you? You are great. Now you have this little Afrikaner people you have fought offering you peace at last and their hand. . . . If I were an Englishman I would be glad to take that hand.'

He said again:

'I submit to you . . . I submit to you with all my heart: nothing is asked of my English-speaking friends, nothing is asked of you which you cannot honestly accept as a basis of co-operation in the future.

'I should like to know before I go, and I have not a long way to go in the life of this country, that, after the storms of the past, I have succeeded in my small measure in bringing the people of this country together. . . .'

There remained a small party of Englishmen—they called themselves the Dominion Party—standing out against



J. C. SMUTS, 1934





### 'IF I CANNOT BE TRUSTED'

him, voicing increasingly their sense of betrayal, saying the country was given to the Boers, and that Englishmen suffered in South Africa to-day as once in the Transvaal under Kruger, blaming him. And to those who could believe he had failed the English, he said at nearly the end of 1935:

'You have known me in the public life of this country for a lifetime—you have known what I have stood for. You tell me at my time of life that I have turned my back on the past, that I no longer believe the ideals I have preached in the past. . . .

'It is not a libel against me. It is a libel against human nature, against my fellow men.

'If I cannot be trusted after what I have done for a lifetime, then who can be trusted in this country? . . . If I cannot be trusted, who can be trusted in this world? . . .'

He had said, once or twice during the year, that he was coming to the end. He could not come to the end. It was endless (until the people were at peace or he himself), the work he had to do for South Africa.



## Appendix A

These are Smuts' ideas and words which occur also in the League Covenant of the Peace Treaty:

Smuts' theme in general and the Covenant's Preamble.

Smuts' Clause (10): The Constitution of the League is a General Conference, a Council and Councils of Arbitration and Conciliation. The Covenant's Article II: The Action of the League is effected by an Assembly and a Council.

Smuts' Clause (11) and the Covenant's Article III: The General Conference or Assembly consists of representatives from constituent states, with equal voting power, meeting once a year and dealing with world peace and other international matters.

Smuts' Clauses (12) and (13) and the Covenant's Article IV: The Council consists of representatives of Great Powers together with selected members drawn from Minor Powers within the League (so that the Great Powers have a bare majority), and it meets periodically.

Smuts' Clause (12): A minority of three or more may veto any decision of the Council. The Covenant's Article V: Unanimous agreement is required except where otherwise stated.

Smuts' Clause (13) and the Covenant's Article IV: The Council has a permanent Secretariat and Staff.

Smuts' Clauses (16) and (17) and the Covenant's Article VIII: The Council has the right to determine each state's essential military equipment (those limits not to be exceeded

## APPENDIX A

without the Council's authority); to advise on the nationalisation of armaments; and to receive information concerning the scale of these armaments.

Smuts' Clause (18) and the Covenant's Articles XII and XIII: Members of the League agree to submit their disputes to arbitration before going to war.

Smuts' Clause (20): 'The Peace Treaty shall provide that if a dispute should arise between any members of the League as to the interpretation of a treaty, or as to any question of international law, or as to any fact which if established would constitute a breach of any international obligation, or as to any damage alleged and the nature and measure of the reparation therefor, and if such dispute cannot be settled by negotiation, the members bind themselves to submit the dispute to arbitration and to carry out any award or decision which may be rendered.'

The Covenant's Article XIII: 'Disputes as to the interpretation of a treaty, as to any question of international law, as to the existence of any fact which if established would constitute a breach of any international obligation, or as to the extent and nature of the reparation to be made for any such breach, are declared to be among those which are generally suitable for submission to arbitration. . . . The members of the League agree that they will carry out in full good faith any award that may be rendered. . . .'

Smuts' Clause (21) and Covenant's Article XV: If disputes are not settled by arbitration because the parties to it cannot agree, the Council may publish its decision.

Smuts' Clause (19): 'If any member of the League breaks its covenant under Clause (18) it shall *ipso facto* become at war with all the other members of the League, which shall subject it to complete economic and financial boycott, including the severance of all trade and financial relation and the prohibition of all intercourse between

## APPENDIX A

their subjects and the subjects of the covenant-breaking state, and the prevention, as far as possible, of the subjects of the covenant-breaking state from having any commercial or financial intercourse with the subjects of any other state, whether a member of the League or not.

‘While all members of the League are obliged to take the above measures, it is left to the Council to recommend what effective naval or military force the members shall contribute, and, if advisable, to absolve the small members of the League from making such contribution.’

The Covenant’s Article XVI: ‘Should any member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenants . . . it shall *ipso facto* be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the covenant-breaking state, and the prevention of all financial, commercial or personal intercourse between the nationals of any state, whether a member of the League or not.

‘It shall be the duty of the Council to recommend to the several Governments concerned what effective military, naval or air force the members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the Covenants of the League.’

Smuts’ Clauses (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7) and the Covenant’s Article XXII:

(2) Territories that have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the states which formerly governed them, shall be entrusted to the League and not subjected to national annexation.

(3) The wishes of the peoples concerned shall be considered in the choice of a mandatory power.

(4) Authority shall be vested in the League.

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(5) The League may delegate its authority to some other state approved by the mandated territory.

(6) The degree of authority, control or administration to be exercised by the mandatory power shall be explicitly defined by the Council. The League shall call for periodic reports from the mandatory state.

(7) The mandatory state shall grant equal opportunities to other members of the League for trade and commerce and shall form no military forces beyond those necessary for police purposes.

Smuts' Clause (14) and the Covenant's Article XXIII: The League deals with specified matters of an international character.

## Appendix B

### SMUTS' TWENTY-ONE CLAUSES

#### A. THE POSITION AND POWERS OF THE LEAGUE

(1) That in the vast multiplicity of territorial, economic and other problems with which the Conference will find itself confronted it should look upon the setting up of a League of Nations as its primary and basic task, and as supplying the necessary organ by means of which most of those problems can find their only stable solution. Indeed, the Conference should regard itself as the first or preliminary meeting of the League, intended to work out its organisation, functions and programme.

(2) That, so far at any rate as the peoples and territories formerly belonging to Russia, Austria-Hungary and Turkey are concerned, the League of Nations should be considered as the reversionary in the most general sense and as clothed with the right of ultimate disposal in accordance with certain fundamental principles. Reversion to the League of Nations should be substituted for any policy of national annexation.

(3) These principles are: firstly, that there shall be no annexation of any of these territories to any of the victorious Powers, and secondly, that in the future government of these territories and peoples the rule of self-determination, or the consent of the governed to their form of government, shall be fairly and reasonably applied.

(4) That any authority, control or administration which

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may be necessary in respect of these territories and peoples, other than their own self-determined autonomy, shall be the exclusive function of and shall be vested in the League of Nations by or on behalf of it.

(5) That it shall be lawful for the League of Nations to delegate its authority, control or administration in respect of any people or territory to some other State whom it may appoint as its agent or mandatory, but that wherever possible the agent or mandatory so appointed shall be nominated or approved by the autonomous people or territory.

(6) That the degree of authority, control or administration exercised by the mandatory State shall in each case be laid down by the League in a special Act or Charter, which shall reserve to it complete power of ultimate control and supervision, as well as the right of appeal to it from the territory or people affected against any gross breach of the mandate by the mandatory State.

(7) That the mandatory State shall in each case be bound to maintain the policy of the open door, or equal economic opportunity for all, and shall form no military forces beyond the standard laid down by the League for purposes of internal police.

(8) That no new State arising from the old Empires be recognised or admitted into the League unless on condition that its military forces and armaments shall conform to a standard laid down by the League in respect of it from time to time.

(9) That, as the successor to the Empires, the League of Nations will directly and without power of delegation watch over the relations *inter se* of the new independent States arising from the break-up of those Empires, and will regard as a very special task the duty of conciliating and composing differences between them with a view to the maintenance of good order and general peace.



## APPENDIX B

### B. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE LEAGUE

(10) The Constitution of the League will be that of a permanent Conference between the Governments of the constituent States for the purpose of joint international action in certain defined respects, and will not derogate from the independence of those States. It will consist of a General Conference, a Council, and Courts of Arbitration and Conciliation.

(11) The General Conference, in which all constituent States will have equal voting power, will meet periodically to discuss matters submitted to it by the Council. These matters will be general measures of international law or arrangements or general proposals for limitation of armaments or for securing world peace, or any other general resolutions, the discussion of which by the Conference is desired by the Council before they are forwarded for the approval of the constituent Governments. Any resolutions passed by the Conference will have the effect of recommendations to the national Governments and Parliaments.

(12) The Council will be the executive committee of the League, and will consist of the Prime Ministers or Foreign Secretaries or other authoritative representatives of the Great Powers, together with the representatives drawn in rotation from two panels of the Middle Powers and the Minor States respectively, and in such a way that the Great Powers have a bare majority. A minority of three or more can veto any action or resolution of the Council.

(13) The Council will meet periodically, and will, in addition, hold an annual meeting of Prime Ministers or Foreign Secretaries for a general interchange of views, and for a review of the general policies of the League. It will appoint a permanent Secretariat and Staff, and will appoint joint committees for the study and co-ordination of the

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international questions with which the Council deals, or questions likely to lead to international disputes. It will also take the necessary steps for keeping up proper liaison, not only with the Foreign Offices of the constituent Governments, but also with the authorities acting on behalf of the League in various parts of the world.

(14) Its functions will be:

(a) To take executive action or control in regard to the matters set forth in Section A or under any international arrangements or conventions.

(b) To administer and control any property of an international character, such as international waterways, rivers, straits, railways, fortifications, air stations, etc.

(c) To formulate for the approval of the Governments general measures of international law, or arrangements for limitation of armaments or promotion of world peace.

(Its remaining functions in regard to world peace are dealt with in the following Section C.)

### C. THE LEAGUE AND WORLD PEACE

(15) That all the States represented at the Peace Conference shall agree to the abolition of conscription or compulsory military service; and that their future defence forces shall consist of militia or volunteers, whose numbers and training shall, after expert inquiry, be fixed by the Council of the League.

(16) That while the limitation of armaments in the general sense is impracticable, the Council of the League shall determine what direct military equipment and armament is fair and reasonable in respect of the scale of forces laid down under paragraph (15), and that the limits fixed by the Council shall not be exceeded without its permission.

(17) That all factories for the manufacture of direct weapons of war shall be nationalised and their production

## APPENDIX B

shall be subject to the inspection of the officers of the Council; and that the Council shall be furnished periodically with returns of imports and exports of munitions of war into or from the territories of its members, and as far as possible into or from other countries.

(18) That the Peace Treaty shall provide that the members of the League bind themselves jointly and severally not to go to war with one another—

(a) without previously submitting the matter in dispute to arbitration, or to inquiry by the Council of the League; and

(b) until there has been an award, or a report by the Council; and

(c) not even then, as against a member which complies with the award, or with the recommendation (if any) made by the Council in its report.

(19) That the Peace Treaty shall provide that if any member of the League breaks its covenant under paragraph (18), it shall *ipso facto* become at war with all the other members of the League, which shall subject it to complete economic and financial boycott, including the severance of all trade and financial relations and the prohibition of all intercourse between their subjects and the subjects of the covenant-breaking State, and the prevention, as far as possible, of the subjects of the covenant-breaking State from having any commercial or financial intercourse with the subjects of any other State, whether a member of the League or not.

While all members of the League are obliged to take the above measures, it is left to the Council to recommend what effective naval or military force the members shall contribute, and, if advisable, to absolve the smaller members of the League from making such contribution.

The covenant-breaking State shall, after the restoration of

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peace, be subject to perpetual disarmament and to the peaceful régime established for new States under paragraph (8).

(20) That the Peace Treaty shall further provide that if a dispute should arise between any members of the League as to the interpretation of a treaty, or as to any question of international law, or as to any fact which if established would constitute a breach of any international obligation, or as to any damage alleged and the nature and measure of the reparation to be made therefor, and if such dispute cannot be settled by negotiation, the members bind themselves to submit the dispute to arbitration and to carry out any award or decision which may be rendered.

(21) That if on any ground it proves impracticable to refer such dispute to arbitration, either party to the dispute may apply to the Council to take the matter of the dispute into consideration. The Council shall give notice of the application to the other party, and make the necessary arrangements for the hearing of the dispute. The Council shall ascertain the facts with regard to the dispute and make recommendations based on the merits, and calculated to secure a just and lasting settlement. Other members of the League shall place at the disposal of the Council all information in their possession which bears on the dispute. The Council shall do its utmost by mediation and conciliation to induce the disputants to agree to a peaceful settlement. The recommendations shall be addressed to the disputants and shall not have the force of decisions. If either party threatens to go to war in spite of the recommendations, the Council shall publish its recommendations. If the Council fails to arrive at recommendations, both the majority and the minority on the Council may publish statements of the respective recommendations they favour, and such publication shall not be regarded as an unfriendly act by either of the disputants.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1917

*March.* Smuts comes to London for the Imperial War Conference, is sent on a mission to Belgium and France, and interviews the French President and the King of the Belgians.

*April.* He reports on the Western Front.

*May.* He identifies himself with the League, defines the British Commonwealth, refuses the Palestine Command and the presidency of the Irish Convention, makes a number of significant speeches, receives (as continually during his war years) the freedoms of cities and the honours of universities, and is enormously acclaimed throughout the British Isles.

*June.* He is invited by Mr. Lloyd George to join his War Cabinet of six. He reports on the changed international situation, favouring an Eastern rather than a Western offensive, but also an attack in Flanders to free the Channel ports and withdraw German pressure from the exhausted French.

*July.* He suggests and comes to preside over the War Priorities Committee. He reports on the aerial defences of London and the unification of the flying services.

*August—October.* He presides over the Air Organisation Committee and a result of his work is the Royal Air Force which exists to-day. He sits on various committees of the War Cabinet and comes to be called, because of his variety

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

of work, the Empire's handyman. He settles several strikes, notably, in October, a strike of Welsh miners.

*November.* Following the disasters of Passchendaele and Caporetto he accompanies Mr. Lloyd George to Rapallo, where they meet the Italian King and the French Prime Minister. From Rapallo grows the Supreme War Council of Versailles.

*December.* He reports on the Cambrai disaster. He meets Count von Mensdorff in Geneva to investigate the possibility of a separate peace with Austria. There is no possibility.

### 1918

*January.* The Fourteen Points. . . . Smuts visits the Western Front to inspect the British forces and consult with the army commanders about their requirements. He reports that the British line, if heavily attacked, will break at two particular points.

*February.* He helps to plan the Palestine campaign, which ultimately takes place in October 1918.

*March—April.* Foch in Supreme Command. Great German onslaught. The line breaks where Smuts indicated in January, and he has to report on the calamity.

*May.* He protests in a speech at Glasgow against Mr. Lloyd George's theory of a 'Knock-out Blow', and asks for a victory that shall not jeopardise 'the civilisation we are out to save'. Lord Lansdowne later quotes this speech in support of his own peace-by-negotiation letter of November 1917.

*June.* The Imperial War Cabinet and the General Staff doubt whether the war will be over in 1919, and Smuts speaks as in his Glasgow speech.

*July—August.* Victories under Foch. Ludendorff knows by August that the Germans must lose, but the British War

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Cabinet doubts whether the war will be over before 1920, and Smuts continues in the mood of his Glasgow speech.

*September.* Wilson finally supplements his Fourteen Points. Bulgaria gives in.

*October.* The Enemy Powers accept as 'a basis for Peace Negotiations' the Fourteen and Supplementary Points. The Palestine campaign. Turkey and Austria give in.

*November.* Armistice.

*December.* Smuts publishes his League of Nations Plan, and resigns (the war being over) from the War Cabinet.

### 1919

*January—February.* Smuts and Botha at the Peace negotiations in Paris. Woodrow Wilson is captivated by Smuts' League Plan. The nations come questing to Paris.

*March.* Smuts protests continually against the terms of the Peace Treaty. The question of Reparations (already considered by French, English and American authorities) is put before Smuts. A definition is required of the words in Wilson's amended peace offer: 'damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property by land, by sea, and from the air.' Smuts includes pensions and bonuses among Germany's liabilities. His opinion prevails on Wilson and affects the Peace, and he struggles henceforth to undo this unforeseen result of his work.

*April.* Hungary, under Soviet rule, is still at war, and Smuts visits Bela Kun at Budapest to persuade him to peace. Bela Kun is on the point of making peace when instructions from Russia prohibit him. But Smuts is attracted by Kun's idea of an economic union between Hungary, Austria and the neighbouring states, discusses it with President Masaryk and the Austrians, who favour it, and suggests it at Paris, where it is (fatally, he thinks) turned down.

*May—June.* General Hertzog leads a deputation to Paris

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

to ask for the return of the old Boer Republics. Smuts continues his lone attack on the Peace Treaty, and, in the process, all but quarrels with Mr. Lloyd George. He discusses with Mr. J. M. Keynes the publication, for the world's enlightenment, 'of what the financial and economic clauses of the Treaty actually are and mean', and the result is Mr. Keynes' book: *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. Smuts refuses at first to sign the peace, but is persuaded by Botha and Mr. Lloyd George to sign under protest. He publishes his historic protest the same afternoon.

*July.* Smuts leaves England for South Africa.

*August.* He returns to a South Africa depressed, racially and industrially, by the War, and hostile to himself. Botha dies, and Smuts becomes Prime Minister of the Union.

*November.* He pleads with America not to reject the Peace.

### 1920

The result of an election, fought in March on the issue of secession from England, is a moral triumph for the party under General Hertzog, but a deadlock for Government. Smuts offers to form a best man Government. The Unionist (English) Party joins him, but the Nationalist (exclusive Boer) Party under General Hertzog demands terms he cannot accept. Labour goes up. There are continual strikes in Johannesburg. During the year natives form trade unions and strike, other natives await the Millennium and disregard the law—in each case bloodshed results. Over seventy thousand natives also strike on the Rand mines.

### 1921

Smuts goes to the country with his newly assembled party and comes home with a strong majority. Labour goes down. In June Smuts attends an Imperial Conference in



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London. The King consults him about Ireland, and Smuts prepares the speech from the throne which the King next week delivers in opening the Ulster Parliament. The speech is considered to have had an historic effect. The Sinn Feiners make touch with Smuts, he goes to Ireland, and, largely through his intervention, the Irish Free State comes into being. Smuts is met on his return to South Africa by embittered unemployed. Taxation, retrenchment and racialism combine with revolutionary agitation to cause great unrest throughout the country, but particularly on the Rand. There is also this year the greatest drought in fifty years.

1922

The Rand Revolution. Smuts attempts conciliation. The revolution spreads. There is terrorism. Armed revolutionaries murder mine officials and natives, and the Rand comes practically under their power. After waiting, some think, too long, Smuts comes up from Cape Town and, after fighting and much bloodshed, the revolution ends in three days. Labour turns heavily against Smuts and towards General Hertzog. Smuts again loses political ground.

1923

Smuts broadcasts through the American press a vehement defence of Wilson and his policy. He attends in September an Imperial Conference in London, and strongly denounces French policy on the Ruhr. His denunciation has a great effect, and Streseman is attracted by his sympathy for the Germans. In South Africa Smuts continues to go down politically.

1924

Smuts finds the political uncertainty intolerable, startles the country and his own followers by suddenly dissolving

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Parliament. In the ensuing election he is badly defeated by a Nationalist-Labour Pact.

1925

He sets out his philosophy in a book called *Holism and Evolution*.

1929

He presides at the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which this year takes place in South Africa. His political star has gradually, since the last election, been rising, but he is now defeated in an election by means not altogether admirable. He accepts the Rhodes Memorial Lectureship at Oxford.

1930

He presides in America over the League's Tenth Anniversary Meeting, tours the States and Canada, and is honoured by cities and universities. Back in South Africa, he opposes a Quota Act designed to keep Jewish immigrants out of the Union, but is overwhelmingly defeated, except that, through his intervention, women and children overseas are allowed to join their men already in the country.

1931

He presides over the Centenary Meeting of the British Association that takes place in London and York. While he is in England, Britain goes off gold, and he urgently recommends South Africa to follow sterling. The South African Government derisively rejects his advice.

1932

Great depression in South Africa as a consequence of adhering to the gold standard. Dissatisfaction with the

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Government. By-elections go to Smuts. He continues his campaign against the gold standard. Tielman Roos, an appeal court judge, once a prominent Nationalist politician, suddenly resigns from the Bench and appeals to all parties to unite under him on an Off Gold policy.

1933

The flight of capital from South Africa having compelled the Government to go off gold, a great gold boom results. The Government feels itself unsafe. Thoughts of coalition are, generally speaking, in the air. Smuts is always ready to coalesce. It becomes, in effect, a question of which leader—Smuts, Roos or General Hertzog—will submit himself to the leadership of which other leader; and Smuts chooses, for the good of the country, to submit himself to General Hertzog. In February a Nationalist-South African Party Coalition is formed, goes to the country, and wins practically every seat. Two Roosites are returned, but Roos himself is defeated. The Coalition Parties decide to fuse. Smuts attends an Economic Conference in London. No great results except to Russia.

1934

A leading Nationalist, Dr. Malan, demands a new Act to define South Africa's present position in the British Commonwealth. The new Act, since it does not completely separate South Africa from England, fails to please him, and he goes with a small party (the Purified Nationalists) into Opposition. A still smaller English party (the Dominion Party) is dissatisfied with the Act for not sufficiently linking South Africa with England. The gold boom continues. The rains fall.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1935

The Purified Nationalists begin to make headway against the United Party, the Dominion Party also rather improves its position, General Hertzog feels the increasing hostility of his old supporters (chiefly in the Free State), Smuts pleads with the English to trust him.

1936

Smuts supports a compromise on the Cape native vote.

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PERSONAL means derived directly from General Smuts.

PRIVATE SOURCE means derived from materials (not publicly accessible) written or collected by him.

PRIVATE INFORMATION means derived from talk with his family or other reliable people.

The dates of speeches as reported by newspapers are given as their References.

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